

BIBLE

SLAVEHOLDING NOT SINFUL ;

A R E P L Y

TO

“SLAVEHOLDING NOT SINFUL,

BY SAMUEL B. HOWE, D.D.”

BY

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P R E F A C E .

THE publication of the following pages will, in the view of many, subject the author to the double imputation : of vanity, in attempting to instruct the world upon a subject that has been so thoroughly discussed ; and of foolish fanaticism, in making the attempt when men's minds are so much excited concerning it. But if error has given itself prominence by a formal statement, the most familiar truths may fairly be quoted against it. And if men's minds are in a state even of angry excitement, the cure of the evil, if it could be found, would not consist in absolute silence, but in counsels so full of the wisdom and forbearance of Christ that they might at once disarm men's passions, and relieve their doubts. No man will claim to have reached that rare result. But no candid reader of the following argument will deny that the writer has sincerely aimed at it. If he has uttered one word that is wanting in true sympathy for good men who are seeking to deal with the evils of slavery in the spirit of the Gospel, let him be condemned for it. If he has sought to show, in clear but temperate language, what that spirit demands, even

those who differ from his views will apprehend no mischief from their expression.

While the following discussion would not have been attempted, but for the publication of the pamphlet, "Slaveholding not Sinful," and while its direct aim is to answer all the arguments therein advanced ; it has, for the sake of securing as much completeness as the haste of its preparation, and other constant duties would allow, touched upon arguments for which the respected author of that pamphlet is not responsible. In most cases the distinction is noticed.

BIBLE SLAVEHOLDING NOT SINFUL.

Amos A. Phelps

THE argument, which it is proposed to review in the following pages, is entitled to the most respectful consideration. Not only the importance of the topic it discusses, but the age and position of its author, together with his enviable reputation for piety and candor and sound learning, may well attract to it the interest of the Christian community. The Reformed Dutch Church, however, may be expected to regard it with special attention. Of all the elements of a discussion,* as earnest, and, on many accounts, as important as any that have marked her history, this alone survives. It offers its fair, unscarred front, as "An Argument before the General Synod of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, October, 1855." The publication of such an argument, folloyed only by expressions of commendation, might naturally be considered as proving that our Church, as a body, either consents to its conclusions, or finds it hard to combat them. A large proportion of our ministers and laymen are unwilling to be thus interpreted. The desire to express the views of some of these and the grounds upon which they rest, has given rise to the following reply.

The argument of Dr. Howe is inconclusive to not a few minds, and for this chief reason, namely ; the indefiniteness of its terms. The term "slaveholding," or "slavery," which is the fulcrum of the whole discussion, is used, without qualifi-

* It concerned the application of the "North Carolina Classis of the German Reformed Church" for ecclesiastical connection with the "Reformed Protestant Dutch Church."

cation, to designate the relation between Abraham and his servants ; between the Israelites under the law and theirs ; between the heathen Romans and theirs ; between the early Christians and theirs ; and lastly, between our own countrymen and theirs. Now it may be true that there runs through all these relations one constant element ; but there may be fifty others that are changing, and each of these changing elements may be as truly essential to the system it characterizes, as that other one that is constant in them all. Now will the single element, upon which the name hinges, constitute so real an identity between the different systems, that you can argue conclusively from the aggregate of one system to the aggregate of another ? Because the particular slaveholding of Abraham was not sinful, does it follow, just for that reason, that the particular slaveholding of any man that has ever lived after him, also was not sinful ? Is a mere word to have in it all the force of justice and eternal law, and to guaranty the approbation of God to every thing it touches ? This surely will not be pretended. The position of the argument before us must be, that the mere holding a man in involuntary servitude, that is, that slaveholding with no addition of gratuitous cruelty is not sinful. But the proposition is not definite yet. For what is this mere slaveholding ? If some man could succeed in reducing one of our own citizens to bondage, and afterwards should treat him with all the kindness consistent with his involuntary servitude, would such a relation constitute the mere slaveholding which is not sinful ? The answer will doubtless be, no ; and for this reason : that the slave became a slave by wrong and violence, and that every day of his slavery repeats and aggravates the wrong of his capture. The very simple proposition ‘Slaveholding not sinful,’ becomes then not a little complicated, and must take this form—merely holding as a slave one who is rightfully a slave, is not sinful ; a proposition which hardly needs to be proved out of the Bible or any other book ; but which needs to be followed up with a very careful discussion to make it countenance any actual slaveholding, whether in America or elsewhere. For the practical question immediately arises,

When is the slave rightfully a slave? Just here cases of conscience may easily occur. Some of our forefathers, for example, who received the Guineamen fresh from the hold of the slave-ship, might possibly have doubted very painfully whether those men were rightfully slaves. Some of their descendants, who have inherited the institution, though they hold themselves ready to resolve such a difficulty very promptly, and would by no means own a man who had once been free, still perplex themselves about his children, and cannot decide at what generation the wrong of the ancestor's capture dies out, and the bondage becomes right. While others of them, with consciences perhaps over tender, and with narrow views, can never forget how the relation began, and confess before God that time can never justify it. Now, if the Bible countenances slavery at all, as we hold it does, it must have left us the means by which any intelligent and candid man can clear up all such doubts as these, and decide the fundamental question above proposed, namely, When is a slave rightfully a slave? For when he is, of course you may hold him.

The argument before us gives us no hint of the Bible's instructions upon this point ; and the omission would be not a little strange, if it were not the rule with arguments upon that side. They demonstrate conclusively out of the Bible that slaveholding is not sinful, and never tell us out of the Bible what that sinless slaveholding is. We call the attention of those who shall construct such arguments for the future, to this material omission of their predecessors ; and invite them to make their demonstration of the Bible's approval of slavery intelligible, by incorporating in it the Bible's definition of a slave. We make the request, but it will not soon be granted. Not because such a definition is hard to give ; for we hold that when the Bible teaches morals, it teaches them clearly ; but it would explode the argument like a bomb-shell. No system of modern slavery could stand before it for a moment. If the candid writer of the pages before us had begun his task with such a definition, he would never have prosecuted it, but would have discarded at once the cause he had assumed.

Such a definition we propose to offer. We wish to show, with all candor and distinctness, what kinds of slaves and of slaveholding are recognized in the word of God.

Our information must be derived from one of two sources. If the Bible contains any organic law of slavery, this must define the Scriptural idea of slavery at once. If no such law exists, we must seek light from such particular examples of slaveholding as the Bible contains.

Does the Bible furnish any organic law of slavery? It does not.

The curse pronounced upon Canaan can constitute no such law. It was what it professed to be—a curse, a prophecy of evil fulfilled chiefly in the subjection of the Canaanites to the nation of Israel. If it was intended for a law, it must be a severe one indeed; for the terms of it are, “a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.” Every reader of the Old Testament knows the force of this expression. When we read of the “heaven of heavens,” we know that the highest heaven is indicated; the phrase “holy of holies,” describes the holiest of holy places; and so “servant of servants” must mean the most wretched and degraded of slaves. A sad fate, indeed, does such a law fasten upon “Sidon, Canaan’s first-born, and Heth, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgasite, and the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite, and the Arvadite, and the Zemorite, and the Hamathite;” for these were the descendants of Canaan, [Gen. 10,] and we know of no others. Let one who wishes for a slave that he may safely abuse, trace down the easy genealogy to some unlucky scion of the race, and put the law upon him. Was a more whimsical plea ever heard of, than that by which this curse upon Canaan is made authority for African Slavery? It is but justice to the argument before us to say that it has implicated itself in no such folly.

The warrant which God gave to Abraham’s slaveholding can in no sense be called an organic law of slavery, but, at most, the authorization of slaveholding in that particular instance. It may stand as an example, but not as a formal law. If the argument before us contends, as it seems to, that the

connection of the rite of circumcision with slavery gives to slavery itself all the permanence of that rite, and of baptism which has taken its place, we claim the privilege of arguing similarly from the circumcision of Ishmael, which is said to have been by divine direction, [Gen. 17, 23,] and from the broad command that included "every man-child in their generations," and thus to prove a standing law of concubinage and polygamy. If the New Testament had the effect to condemn those practices, will Dr. Howe admit that there was a standing law for them till our Saviour came? The simple truth is, that the circumcision, in neither case, was intended to confirm any usages or rights of the head of the household, but only to embrace in God's covenant all the members of it.

The Mosaic law of slavery was an organic law for the economy to which it belonged, but no man now makes the code of Moses the rule of his slaveholding. Those who pay the greatest deference to it, only claim that they are adopting its principles.—But something is attempted to be made of the introduction of the expressions, "man-servant," and "maid-servant," into the Decalogue.

Any argument for slavery, that relies upon these expressions, is entitled to no consideration till it has proved, what the argument before us does not venture even to assert, namely, that the expressions in question are distinctive, and can indicate nothing but slaves. For if the terms are general, and refer to slavery only by the usage of the times, the usage of other times may refer them just as fairly to any other class of servants. Just as that very word 'servant' is constantly used among slaveholders in our day, both in legal and familiar language, to designate slaves; and yet, if a slaveholder should have need to use the most general and equivocal name for servants of all sorts, he would be forced to use that same expression. Against so loose an argument as that we are considering, we are not called upon to prove anything; but we assert, and stand ready to prove, that the original terms for 'man-servant' and 'maid-servant' in the Decalogue cannot be shown by their etymology to have the least hint of slavery in them; and that, so far as their usage is concerned, the whole

Hebrew language could not replace them with any current names for servants that should not be equally tainted with the prevailing notion of slavery, if we except only the specific name for a hired servant ; and how well that exclusive term would have served the purpose of a law primarily intended for slaveholders, every reasonable man can easily decide. The truth is, there was no choice of language to be made. Slavery was so much the rule, that it reduced to its uses every equivocal expression. We hazard nothing in saying that if the terms ‘man-servant’ and ‘maid-servant’ with all their breadth of meaning, were to be translated back into Hebrew, the original terms of the Decalogue would render them more nearly than would any others. To decide the perpetual lawfulness of slavery by the usage which such words obtained under such circumstances, is impossible.

But this mere verbal reasoning, on either side, is entirely trifling. Every man knows that the Decalogue, though a law for the race, was adapted in its phraseology to the particular people to whom it was immediately addressed. The introduction refers to their deliverance from Egypt. The phrase, “The Lord thy God,” so often repeated, has the same national reference. The fifth commandment points as plainly to the national inheritance in Canaan, as though that land had been called by name ; and the fourth commandment refers to the peculiar terms upon which Gentiles, or strangers, should be suffered to dwell among them. Nay, there is, in the tenth commandment, a designation of the very beasts of burden that were then in most common use. Now, slavery was a national peculiarity, and being ordained of God as such, it was as innocent and lawful as any of the rest, but as truly national and distinctive. The rule in the interpretation of such a code is simply this,—That the local and national terms which it embodies are, as times and circumstances may change, to be interpreted by their nearest equivalents. It is a law which defines its meaning, not by abstractions, but by examples. God’s relation to Israel, so peculiar in some of its aspects, stands for his covenant relation to all his people. Canaan stands for any land where his people may dwell. The house, and the ox, and

the ass, for all forms of property, and slave, if that be the word, for any lawful servant. The same reasoning that can prove by the bare fact that a slave was a lawful servant then, that he must be such the world over, can prove just as well that all the world has a right to the land of Canaan. If the enumeration of men-servants and maid-servants among articles of property, is thought to bear upon the question, let the enumeration of the wife in the same list, interpreted as it must be by the existing notions of the husband's property in her, hold a wife to the same relation for all time to come ; and let those who prove out of the Decalogue that slaves are property, maintain the Mosaic arrangement in their inventory of goods ; namely, first the house, then the wife, then the slaves, and then the cattle. But, in fact, the common sense of the whole Christian world, not excluding the authors of the argument before us, has settled this question, and confidently decided that domestics, of whatever name, are the men-servants and the maid-servants intended in the Decalogue.

If any one is yet dissatisfied, and insists that the Decalogue does give to slavery a standing license ; surely it gives a man no broader claim to his slave than he can have to his cattle, and since the latter claim stands not by mere possession, but by rightful possession, so must the former. If one were suspected of having stolen an ox, or of having received it after it was stolen, he could hardly arrest the investigation by quoting the words "his ox" out of the Decalogue, to prove that a man might own an ox ; and if a similar suspicion should arise in regard to a slave, a similar quotation of the words "his slave," if the law contained them, would not bar proceedings. Such an expression might prove a man's right to hold a slave, which we do not deny, but it could not settle summarily that man's right to that particular slave. If it could, every master among us might make his servant a slave to-morrow. And so we are thrown back upon the fundamental question : When is a slave rightfully a slave ? Since the Decalogue gives us no means of deciding that question, it can be, in no sense, an organic law of slavery.

For a reason similar to that just alluded to, the New Testa-

ment contains no such law ; for if it does, since old systems of slavery die out, as some have done, the organic law of slavery must leave us at no loss how to institute new ones. Let any man take in his hand the apostle's code of slavery, and go into any community where the institution is unknown, to teach them how to found it. Why should he not ? What standing law is there in the whole Bible, that ought to confound and paralyze a good man, when he attempts to put it in practice ? Let all preachers of the Gospel rebuke their sinful timidity, and instruct the world out of the New Testament, how slavery is to begin. The strongest advocate of an apostolic law of slavery will decline the task. The truth is, that at any abstract or contingent slavery the apostles never hint. There is no shred of a probability that the word would have been so much as named among them, if it had not been forced upon them by that actual and formidable system which they found about them.

The Bible, then, contains no organic law of slavery, and the only warrant that slavery can claim from it, is that of particular examples. For we grant very cheerfully all that the argument before us can be thought to prove—namely, that slavery of some sort is countenanced in the Bible ;—under the Old Testament by express law establishing and defining a system of slaveholding, and under the New, by such general injunctions to masters and slaves as at least tolerated the relation. Now it is true that these examples of authorized slaveholding may embody principles of universal application, and, by means of those principles, may have all the efficacy of an organic law ; but it rests with the friends of slavery so to evolve and define such principles, if indeed they exist, that their nature and application may be fairly seen. The case is just this : If the involuntary subjection of one man to another, for the advantage of the latter, were not named in the Bible at all, the Gospel would raise at least a presumption against it. If it be named, and even approved in certain particular instances, the presumption remains against all other instances, unless they can be shown to be fairly parallel to these. It is an argument, not under a general

law, but from analogy, and the analogy must be shown to exist. Our work, then, is very simple. It is to discover, if we can, the essence of the Divine regulations concerning slavery, under the Old Testament and under the New. We shall then stand ready to admit that any system of slaveholding that shall incorporate so much of the spirit of those regulations as is clearly essential, has the warrant of God's Word, and is a kind of slaveholding that is not sinful. We cannot be asked to admit more.

Slavery, under the Old Testament, whether Patriarchal or Mosaic, was marked by two conditions. The first was that essential element of control on the part of the master, and involuntary obedience upon the part of the slave, without which it would not have been slavery at all. But to this, another element was added, no less marked, and as truly essential to the system. Every slave, by the fact that he was a slave, was entitled to every religious privilege of the new community into which he entered. He was circumcised ; he was instructed ; he was to keep the Sabbath and the feasts ; and whatever hope of God's favor might grow out of these opportunities, was as fairly open to him as to Abraham or any of his children. To understand the full value of these privileges, and of the relation which embodied them, we must remember that at that day it pleased God to limit the knowledge of his will and the rites of his worship to a single people. To be beyond its pale was, with rare exceptions, to be a stranger to the covenants of promise. To be within it, was to be acquainted with them, and to have the opportunity of salvation through them. The nation which was thus distinguished, though not insignificant for numbers, at least was limited. As they were about to take their place, then, upon the territory which was to be opened for their occupancy, chiefly by exterminating wars, there was surely as much kindness to the remnants of the nations about them as to themselves, in the provision that some of those Gentiles, already condemned for their sins, should be made at once to render service to God's people, and to share in God's blessings. No single word will describe that complex relation.

In one aspect, indeed, it was enslavement to men ; in another, it was adoption by God. It is easy to see which was the more important. Now, it was this complex relation that alone could claim the approbation of God under the Old Testament. He ordained, not the half, but the whole ; and it was such a whole that he only could ordain it, and men can never make a copy of it. The circumstances would need to return—the wall of exclusiveness, with darkness without it, and light within it : for if the wall is broken down, and the light diffused, or even diffusing, one prime condition of the relation is wanting. The command, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,” has put a new face upon things. There is no longer a “Jerusalem, in which men ought to worship,” “but in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.” The Gospel is a leaven ; it does not concentrate its influence but spreads it. God’s method of making men Israelites, was to take them to Israel. God’s method of making men Christians, is to send the Gospel to them. And even when there may exist some just occasion to incorporate heathen men into a Christian nation, the attempt to incorporate them by means of slavery cannot plead the warrant of Mosaic slavery until the new system of bondage has, like that, the authority of an express Divine command. It is safe for God to decide upon what terms he will have his religious blessings diffused, but it is not safe for men to decide for him. The Master has made the rule for his Church, and left no exception—“Freely ye have received, freely give.” Shame on the man who would sell the blood-bought blessings of the Gospel for sweat and service, and plead Mosaic law for his excuse ! Can it be one of the approved processes of the Gospel of peace, that every heterogeneous nation, that just calls itself Christian, is endowed with such a mastership of all the heathen, that it may choose where it will its hewers of wood and its drawers of water ? There is, then, and there can be no identity or resemblance between the essence of Old Testament slavery and that of any other slavery that the world shall ever see. That slavery was instituted solely for its

own times, just as clearly as was the Levirate law or the cities of refuge. That slaveholding was not sinful. It began rightfully, in God's distinct command, and it blessed its subjects infinitely more than they could have been blessed without it. Such slaveholding would never be sinful ; but when shall the world see it ?

We have not considered it essential to our argument to insist upon those merciful provisions of the law of Moses, which so largely modified the authority of the master and the labors of the slave. If they should be embodied into the civil law of slavery in our land, the friends of humanity would bless God for the change, and look for a speedy end of slavery itself. If this very inconsistency between those merciful provisions and the principle of American slavery has led to their exclusion from that system, what is this but a formal confession of the point we are maintaining, namely ; that Mosaic slavery does not admit of imitation ? For there is no resemblance between the law that compensates with scrupulous kindness for its own severity, and thus maintains both authority and mercy, and another law which, to sustain itself at all, must legislate, not for mercy, but against it, and build up authority at the cost of its subjects.

But it is claimed that slavery is recognized in the New Testament. If Mosaic slavery can be thought to be included in that recognition, the Gospels alone can have referred to it ; the Epistles certainly did not. If we should grant then, what cannot be proved, that the Gospels did recognize and even approve Mosaic slavery while it was yet lawful, that approbation would no more perpetuate it than would the Saviour's command to the leper, "go show thyself to the priest," perpetuate the Jewish Priesthood. It is not to Mosaic slavery, therefore, that the New Testament argument for slavery has reference ; but to Gentile slavery. This had no relation to that system of the Old Testament which God had ordained. It did not grow out of it. It sustained no analogy to it. It was a heathen product—the offspring of war, and indolence, and lust. In the words of our author, such heathen slavery "had its origin at a time when the world was full of idolatry

and wickedness, and seemed to be fast hastening to the same state of violence and crime as existed before the flood." [p. 20.] There was nothing in such an origin to indicate the favor of God. Still less, if possible, was there in the system itself. "By the Roman law," says Dr. Howe, "he (Philemon) had the power to punish his slave, not only with scourges, but also with death." [p. 26.] Shocking details of the enormities to which that law admitted could easily be given ; but let the following general statement from the pen of the historian, Dr. Robertson, suffice : " Were I to mention the laws and regulations of the most civilized States among the ancients concerning these unfortunate sufferers, were I to relate the treatment which they met with from persons most renowned for their virtue, maxims so inhuman and treatment so barbarous would excite the strongest pity and indignation." * Now if any single element of this system of wickedness and oppression was right and lawful, that fact is to be proved, and not assumed. The fair presumption is against the whole. Under these circumstances the Saviour and the Apostles met it, and whatever lawfulness it has at all, must come from their sanction. So much of it as they approved, either directly or by fair implication, surely was not sinful. What they failed to approve is no better now than it was at first. The process is as simple as a sum in subtraction. Given a system of unauthorized oppression ; given those parts of it which God at length does authorize ; the remainder is unauthorized oppression still.

Now we put it upon the friends of slavery to prove that either the Saviour or his Apostles ever approved a single feature of Roman slavery. We shall be told, that they recognized it so as to imply their approbation, and that they never condemned it. Both assertions we deny.

They never recognized it so as to approve it. Those who claim that they did must define their own language, and tell us what was so recognized and approved. Was it Roman slavery in the gross ? To that monstrous conclusion, indeed, the argument before us fairly tends. For that was the slave-

* Sermon on the World at the Appearance of Christ.

holding of the Centurion, whom our Saviour commended, without a word of rebuke for it, (p. 6 ;) that was the slaveholding concerning which the apostles "gave not the slightest intimation that it was sinful," (p. 6 ;) that was the system to which Paul sent back Onesimus, though it gave to his master "the power to punish him with death." Has the pattern been shown us then ? Is Roman slaveholding the slaveholding which is not sinful ? Then let it go down to the end of time. But the vicious argument runs away with its authors. They surely did not set out to reach that point.

Is there, then, a certain essence of slavery that is to be distinguished from all the sinful accessories of Roman slavery ; and did the Saviour and the apostles recognize and approve that essence ? If that be so, then that essence must have been either defined or undefined. If it was undefined, who is competent to pronounce what the innocent essence of Roman slaveholding was ? How were the early Christians to know when they were passing beyond it into the abuses of slavery ? And if they could guess safely at so loose a rule, how can we be sure that our guess will be as happy ? It is absurd to speak of the divine approval of a notion that is left free to take a thousand different forms in as many minds. But perhaps that essence of mere slavery was defined. Then where ? Not by the bare terms, "master," and "slave." It is common indeed, to select the latter of these, and then to turn it into an abstraction ; and then to define that abstraction with nice analysis, and so to get rid of all the enormities of any particular form of slaveholding. But will the authors of that process remember, that there were two terms used by the apostles, and that they have chosen only the weakest of them for their manipulations ? For if Δοῦλος, by its derivation and intrinsic force, meant only bondman, Κύριος, by derivation and by usage too, meant absolute master. Even English readers will scarcely need to be told, that it was the very word, which, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, stood for Jehovah ; and which, in the New Testament, was applied to our Saviour wherever in our translation he is called Lord. It was the very name for absolute proprietor. Now

when these two terms came together, as correlates ; as they did in the laws and other writings of those days, and as they did in the Epistles ; the weaker one did not define the stronger, but the stronger the weaker. The relation did not take its shape from the slave's mere obligation to serve, but from the master's absolute authority ; and so by usage *Κύριος* stood, in its own proper meaning, as the designation of power that was not to be questioned, and *Δοῦλος*, left its etymological meaning of bondman to designate the subject of such power. No scholar will question the truth of this representation : and under such circumstances to drop out of view entirely the most significant of the apostles' terms, to trace the other back to a meaning far lower than constant usage assigned it, and then to make that isolated and weakened expression stand for the terms which the apostles used, is strange reasoning indeed. If the terms of the apostles are to define the essence of slavery, let them do it, and a shocking definition we shall have. Where then is that definition given ? Not in Mosaic law, as we have seen ; for that was a pattern that can never be copied. To take the mere bondage out of it, and make that, irrespective of its peculiar compensations, the innocent essence of slavery, is as gross an outrage upon all justice and common sense, as to claim that the getting our neighbor's goods is the innocent essence of a bargain. If the New Testament, therefore, approved any essence of slavery, the New Testament must define it : and thus we come to this, the only intelligible and consistent ground, namely, that the New Testament approves only so much of slavery as it approves distinctly.

But in what shall such distinct approbation consist ? In other words, when the Word of God intends to authorize by recognition, an act or custom otherwise unauthorized, what form is that approving recognition to take ? This question is fundamental to the discussion. But the argument before us has not bestowed a word upon it. The truth is, we have not examples enough of this sort of approbation to furnish a rule. What questionable acts, but those of slavery, have good men ever attempted to support in the face of standing law, that seemed to condemn them, by any mere recognition that is

claimed to have approved them? We challenge the friends of this argument to produce any single moral question, of one tithe of the importance of this of slavery, that has ever been settled, or approached a settlement, upon any such ground. And under such circumstances to say that the Saviour, or the apostles, approved slavery by recognizing it, is to talk at random. But if we have not the means of knowing in what that decisive recognition may consist, we have evidence enough to prove in what it may not.

The mere mention of a questionable act or custom, without condemning it, does not approve it. For the sacred narrators often mention the grossest sins without express condemnation, on the ground that they are sufficiently condemned by general laws. Thus, to be told that the slave of the High Priest had his ear cut off; or that a certain soothsaying damsel had masters; or that a hundred other slaves did or suffered a hundred other things, will not be claimed by any one to touch very nearly the matter of the right or wrong of slavery.

If such mere mention be transferred from a narrative to a parable, it does not then imply approbation of the act or custom thus noticed. For a parable is a narrative of events real or imaginary, designed to illustrate some moral lesson. The excellence of the parable lies in the combination of its truth to life or nature, with the clear illustration of the lesson proposed. To gain the first result, incidents are often incorporated, that bear only indirectly upon the second, and the rule for eliciting moral or doctrinal truths out of a parable, is simply this;—that the point is never to be forgotten; and so much of the narrative as bears directly upon it, may safely be insisted upon; and the rest is very precarious footing. Thus, the parable of the unjust steward, elaborately describes his injustice, and never condemns it; and even commends the steward himself. But the commendation is of his wisdom; and his wickedness must fare as well as it can. So, in other parables, our Saviour might speak of slaves and never touch the lawfulness of slavery, until some distinctive feature of slavery should be made to illustrate the very principle which

the parable was designed to enforce. No such parable can be found ; not even if we include that one of the unmerciful servant, quoted with the rest on page 15 of our author ; which, in truth, has nothing to do with slavery. It concerns the office of a “man that was a King.”—Matt. 18. But while this limitation of the force of any argument for slavery that is based upon the parables, is strictly just, it is of little importance, for the reason already alluded to : namely, that when those parables were uttered, Mosaic slavery had the full warrant of God’s law. Surely allusions to a custom that may have been purely Jewish, and so far right, could have no possible bearing upon the justice of slaveholding in our day.

Again, a questionable act or custom, is not so recognized as to be approved, by being made the occasion of a formal command or regulation. For existing facts must be met ; and the prudence that prepares the way of meeting them, in no way pronounces upon the facts themselves. In other words, no lawgiver is to be held responsible for the facts which precede his legislation, and demand it ; but only for such facts as his legislation is adapted to produce. This is most obviously true of such laws as concern the mere endurance of wrong. Such are all those familiar passages of the Gospel which enjoin patience under injuries ; the injuries are not legalized because it is a Christian’s duty to bear them. And upon the very same footing with these, stand those strongest injunctions to slaves, which are quoted so confidently in this discussion ; namely, those that recognize the greatest hardships of slavery. Thus when in 1 Tim. 6 : 1, the “yoke” of slavery is mentioned, for the sake of exhorting the slaves to bear it patiently, that passage surely enjoins patience, and obedience ; but it no more approves that “harshlest bondage” which we are told that expression describes, than did our Saviour approve the smiting upon one cheek, because he directed us to turn the other. One cannot but wonder and regret, that in a day like this, when slavery is so unscrupulous in its pretensions, such an expression should be quoted, with intensifying comment, as a divine warrant for slaveholding.—Again, the passage 1 Pet. 2 : 18, while it bids the slaves take it patiently, when

they do well and suffer for it, goes on to compare such patient suffering to the very suffering of Christ. How monstrous to separate such a passage from its connection, and to strain it into a proof of the apostle's approbation of slavery.—Just so does St. Paul in 1 Cor. 7 : 21, bid Christian slaves be contented with their lot, since they may be acceptable to Christ whether slaves or freemen. What other counsel could he give a slave, to whom slavery was not a matter of choice, but of necessity ? So far as it might be subject to his choice, the apostle counselled him not to continue in it. "If thou mayest be free, use it rather." Expressions like these that we have been considering, if they had filled the New Testament, would have recognized slavery indeed, but would no more have approved those features of it to which they referred, than would a book of directions for men who had fallen among thieves, be an apology for robbery.

But it is evident, now, that a positive wrong may, under certain circumstances, furnish occasion for a course of action, as well as of mere suffering. In that case, the law that should define the necessary action, would in no degree countenance the wrong itself. Thus the Gospel law of repentance presupposes sin, but surely does not excuse it ; and the law of restitution presupposes fraud, but does not excuse it. For the design of the action enjoined in each case is not to perpetuate the wrong, but to cure it. Now it is plain that there are some wrongs, the cure of which may be both prompt and complete. For example, if one has stolen his neighbor's goods, he may restore them, and if it be necessary, fourfold. There are other wrongs which it needs time to rectify, if they can be rectified at all. For example, if one has struck a blow in passion or malice, it may need the provision of the kindest medical attendance, and the lapse of months to restore the sufferer. And there is still a third class of wrongs, the cure of which demands not only time, but the maintenance of some of the forms of the wrong itself. Thus, if one has stolen a child, and carried him away, and then desires to return him ; the child, incredulous or impatient, may struggle upon his way to his father's house, just as he did in leaving it ; so that a mere observer would need to observe very closely, to decide that the man was not

kidnapping the child, even while he was restoring him. Just so, some unscrupulous man may have secured the person of a rival, with the design of holding him in perpetual imprisonment ; a case which no reader of history will find it hard to imagine. After the lapse of months, or of years, the jailer may repent of the wrong ; but by that time the prisoner may be so enervated in mind and body, that sudden liberty would be his sure destruction. Under such circumstances, it becomes the duty of the repenting man to take his captive from his dungeon, to encourage him with the prospect of his speedy liberation, to divert and nourish him and prepare him for it. The former prisoner may submit to the process with cheerfulness, or, eager for liberty, he may seek it prematurely, and at the risk of his life. It then becomes the duty of the other to restrain him, till the restoration of his health, or the care of his friends, would secure him against the danger. Take an illustration somewhat different. A sea captain being about to sail from some island of the Pacific, may, by fraud or violence, detain a youth of the island upon his vessel. Arrived at the next port, the youth may choose to escape. Has the other, if aware of his purpose, a right to yield to it ? Would liberty at Canton, be to the ignorant and helpless savage, a restoration of the liberty he had at New Zealand ?

Now if a Christian teacher were called upon to express an abstract opinion upon any such act of kidnapping or lawless imprisonment, he must condemn it utterly. If, on the other hand, he should come in contact with one of those wrongs when it should be complete and at its very height, and then should undertake to counsel both the author and the subject of the violence, concerning their duty under the circumstances, should he begin to clamor for nothing but liberty ? Nay, if the possessor of the stolen child should be about to give him liberty upon the highway, a hundred miles from his father's house, should not his instructor expressly condemn the mischievous purpose ? And if, in so doing, he could be so thoughtless as to drop no word condemnatory of the original wrong, could he be fairly quoted as having approved it ? In each of the instances supposed, the restraint, though the

same in form, undergoes, at a particular point, a change of its whole essence. Up to the moment when the author of the wrong seeks to repair it, the restraint is prompted by the grossest selfishness and injustice. From that moment forward, it may be prompted by the truest Christian benevolence. The first half is absolutely wrong ; the second half, the circumstances being presupposed, may be absolutely right : not, be it observed, by any claim which the perpetrator of the wrong has acquired by his lawless act, but by the simplest rules of Christian duty to the sufferer himself. In a word, there may be such sins against personal liberty, as rob a man not only of liberty, but of the conditions that fit him for it ; and the reparation for such sins must be double ;—first, of a fitness for liberty, and secondly, of liberty itself.

Now if the enslavement of one class of men to another is a sin at all, it is a sin of this very kind. It has taken a race of men out of circumstances of freedom, which they were competent to meet ; and it has either destroyed that competency by actual degradation, or it has placed them in the midst of new circumstances, in which their competency cannot serve them. It differs from the instances enumerated chiefly in this—that its wrongs demand a longer process to cure them. A short-lived slavery of a single man might be relieved by reinstating him in his former position ; but the long-continued degradation of a race, with all the artificial social usages to which it has given rise, admits of no such summary process. Time has wrought the evil ; and time must cure it. Look, for example, at the slavery with which the apostles had to deal. It is a calculation more moderate than the learned have made, that there was at that day, throughout the Roman Empire, one slave for every freeman. It was common for single masters to be the owners of hundreds. We know that, in some instances, they were the owners of thousands. Among these multitudes, of course, every age and condition was represented. Some, indeed, were trained to such employments as quite prepared them for a state of freedom. Others discharged only such menial duties as left them without the skill, or character, or fore-

thought, that would fit them to provide for themselves ;— for slaves, according to Dr. Howe, (who hardly compliments slavery by the statement,) “are ignorant, unprincipled, immoral men.” Added to these, there were the young, and the old, and the disabled. By what possibility, consistent with the plainest laws of Christian morality, could masters suddenly sunder such relations? To disband the slaves would have been the grossest cruelty, at least to some of them. To sell them would only have been to shift the evil, and doubtless to increase it. To have manumitted those slaves who were competent to care for themselves, while it would by no means have put an end to slavery, would have thrown, perhaps, scores or hundreds of needy, helpless men upon the sole energies of the master, and thus have left them as really unprovided for beneath his roof, as they could have been among strangers. It would have been an act of the same grade of wisdom and morality with that of a captain of a leaking vessel, who should dismiss his hearty crew in the long-boat, and leave the passengers to perish, when the presence and industry of all could have saved the ship. Wealth upon the master’s part, indeed, could have met such an emergency ; but such wealth is not the rule in any community ; and therefore the only security which the slaves, as a body, could have against outright wretchedness, was the permanence of the household, for a long time to come, in the same essential form in which the Gospel found it. But to retain this form at all, there needed to be either the cheerful consent of the slaves themselves, or the power of constraint upon the part of the master. In either case, there would need to be service rendered ; and that for the advantage of the slaves themselves. To support them in indolence, would be most mischievous to them, even if it were not impossible. We have a fair illustration of all the circumstances at our own door. What most earnest opposer of the system of American slavery, if he have any trace of wisdom and goodness in him, could go to-day to the Christian masters of the South, and advise them to disband their slaves? What untold misery would follow the wicked procedure? Would

he venture to counsel the immediate emancipation of all who are well, and skilful, and prudent? Surely most masters could make no such distinction with safety to the helpless slaves they should retain. And thus, even pity for the oppressed could venture upon no general rule for breaking their bonds.

Under such circumstances, to demand that every opposer of the system of slavery should evince his opposition by a blind demand for emancipation, is an absurdity too gross to be measured. The slaveholding which the apostles found might be a sin. But there might be another slaveholding, under the common dictates of the Gospel of Christ, that should be the very cure and atonement for the first. And for that merciful slaveholding rules might be given. The very greatness of the former wrong demanded that they should be given. And when they are pronounced in the true spirit of Christ, are we to be told, in triumph, that they have endorsed the system? Does this put the seal of their approbation upon the scenes of war and rapine, that alone gave that slavery a beginning? Does this sanction the existing notion that a slave is a chattel, and not a person? Does this bid all future ages perpetuate the notion, and secure the subjects of it, by the same heathenish means? In the discussion of this matter there is a disregard of the plainest distinctions, so common and so gross, that one can only wonder at it. The countenance of the apostles extended to the restraints of slavery, but not to the motives of it. It sustained its form, but there is not a hint of sustaining its principles. In a word, the apostles did, concerning slavery, by express injunction, just what the simple spirit of our religion would have done if they had not named it. And thus, we assert, as a matter of fact, that there is not a word of all the apostles' directions concerning slavery, that cannot be heartily repeated to-day to the Christian masters and slaves of the South, and that, by men who claim that the Gospel of Christ has taught them to hate the *principles* of slavery with a perfect hatred.

Here follows a list of them all, not excepting that rebuke of seditious advisers, which the argument before us counts the

end of controversy. Let the candid reader take his New Testament and read each passage carefully, and in its connection, 1 Cor. 7 : 20-23. Eph. 6 : 5-9. Col. 3 : 21-25. Ch. 4 : 1. 1 Tim. 6 : 1-3. The reader will observe that the expression "wholesome words," &c. in the last quoted passage, has reference to all the preceding instructions of the apostle, and not only to those in the immediate context, which refer to slavery. Tit. 2 : 9, 10. 1 Pet. 2 : 18-23.

In perfect consistency with the principles that have been illustrated, and with the formal directions just quoted, stands the agency of the apostle Paul in regard to the return of Onesimus. The facts were these. Onesimus, a slave, having absconded from his Christian master at Colosse, came to Rome, and there, under the influence of St. Paul, became a Christian. The apostle, having entertained, for a moment, the thought of attaching him to his own person, decided rather to direct him to return to his master. The slave cheerfully consented ; and was dismissed with the letter well known as the Epistle to Philemon. In that letter is incorporated the following language, in explanation of the apostle's unwillingness to retain the slave. "Without thy mind would I do nothing ; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly." In that single passage, there is more of the semblance of approving the principles of slavery, than in all the New Testament besides ; for St. Paul calls the service which the absconded slave might render, the master's "benefit," or kindness, and holds himself not justified in receiving it without the master's consent. Is there not here a recognition of just ownership ? Ownership of what ? Of the slave's person ? The apostle does not hint at such a thing ; and if Roman law is to fasten upon his words a meaning which they do not at all express, how shall we stop half way, and not make the apostle sanction the master's power over the life of his slave, as well as over his person ? The truth is, that just as much propriety as there may ever be in a master's holding a slave, just so much propriety is there in acknowledging his claim to the slave's service. Such a claim to service does St. Paul acknowledge, and nothing more. Will

any one explain how the denial of that claim could consist with any thing but immediate and universal emancipation? If the apostle wished for that, it was a wild act to send Onesimus back with such a letter. And if he did not, it would have been as wild an act to retain him.—How far the apostle's regard of such a claim to service would have gone in inclining him to return the person of a Christian slave, or of any other, into the power of a cruel Pagan master, this case does not give us the means of deciding. For one who recognizes even a father's authority over his son, would not be the instrument of returning every runaway son to his particular father. No candid man can read the Epistle to Philemon, and not be sure that the character of Philemon had more to do with the restoration of his slave, than his mere claim to his slave's obedience.—It is wonderful to see with what parade of trumpets and heralds this simple incident is marshalled out to do battle for slavery against all comers, while there is not a feature of it that the most consistent foe of slavery would not have been glad to adopt under the circumstances.

Our object thus far has been to consider the evidence of the New Testament, not against slavery, but for it. And we have considered every particular passage which the friends of the system advance, as containing positive proof in its behalf. The evidence is all in, and it establishes this: That in a day when the half of men were slaves, the apostles spoke of slavery:—That when the immediate abolition of slavery was prohibited by the plainest principles of the Gospel, and of common humanity, the apostles did not abolish it; but still, that all their rules and acts concerning it, were such as the most hearty opposers of the system could have adopted without reserve. And therefore we insist, that the apostles gave no more approbation to slavery, than does any other legislator give to an established wrong which he legislates to cure. The whole social system, as the apostles found it, was like a fool-hardy man that had sinned against some radical law of health, and was suffering for it. They were the wise physicians who adapted their regimen to the disease which it had, and not to the health which it had not; the disease itself was no crime of theirs.

If any shall count this that we have given, a mere theory of the apostles' relations to slavery ; then it is theory against theory. And we are not called upon to establish ours, but the friends of slavery must establish theirs. For how stands the case ? The argument which we are reviewing has undertaken to prove that slaveholding is not sinful ; and has summoned the apostles as witnesses. Now if by the term "slaveholding" is intended the maintenance of such of the mere forms of slavery as common Gospel law forbade to be abolished—an interpretation of the term which the argument never hints at—then the position is established ; and we only regret that the terms of it were not made more definite. But if that word "slaveholding" was intended to include any ideas of a master's ownership in his slave, as it confessedly was, then we wait for the testimony. Let them elicit it. We take our stand upon that sound maxim of all philosophy, that a sufficient explanation of any fact is a final explanation. If there was an actual reason upon the very surface of the existing slavery, that satisfactorily accounts for every word and act of the apostles concerning it, let those who contend for a conjectural reason in the heart of the system, make good their point. We explain the apostles' conduct by the undeniable necessities of the case, common sense and the Gospel being judges. Let those who will have another explanation, find the facts to fit it. The existing facts are exhausted ; they cannot serve them.

But we do not attempt to intrench ourselves behind any such dialectical right. If we have advanced a theory, we stand ready to prove it true. We have been insisting upon a distinction between the form and the principle of slavery ; and we have also insisted that the apostles tolerated the one, under circumstances that enjoined it by the common principles of the Gospel, and that would have made it a flagrant crime to abrogate it. We now undertake to prove that they distinctly condemned the other. If that point is made good, the relations of the New Testament to slavery, become as clear as noonday.

The principle of slavery, according to modern definitions may be this or that, as suits the views of the definer.

We shall reach these views in their turn. But to judge of the apostles' actions, we must look at things from their position. The principle of slavery, in their day, was as clearly defined as any idea could possibly be. And it was this ; that the master was the absolute proprietor of the slave. This proprietorship embodied different prerogatives. The greatest was the right to take the slave's life. Under this there was the right to punish or torture him at the master's discretion ; the right to rob the slave of her virtue ; the right to exact a slave's involuntary and unremunerated labor ; the right to transfer him by sale. These were items more or less prominent in the monstrous idea. The sum was what has been already named, absolute proprietorship. That principle of slavery, be it observed, we extract not only from existing laws and customs, but from the terms which the apostles themselves use. If these terms were intended by them to cover any principle of slavery at all—a thing which we utterly deny—there was no consideration of etymology or usage that could restrict them within their constant and recognized scope. The master was an absolute lord, and the slave was his property. Now it was possible for the apostles to do either of three things : to warrant that proprietorship to its full extent ; or to warrant some of its prerogatives ; or to condemn it utterly. No one will claim that they took the first course. But it is insisted that they took the second ; and we insist that they took the last, and left master and slave standing, not on any footing of abstract right and obligation, but of simple Gospel duty under the circumstances.

In proof of this we do not present any sweeping law against slaveholding, or any rebuke of the believing centurion in the Gospel for holding slaves. And if any are determined still to wonder why this sort of evidence is wanting, let them find a cause which such evidence would serve. For our part, we hold that a general condemnation of slaveholders would have been just one remove from a general condemnation of parents. The proof that we seek is not against slaveholding, but against the principle of slavery.

Are we to look, then, for a formal definition of that principle,

with a law against it ? Such a definition, indeed, would have included no innocent masters ; the blow would have fallen just where it was deserved. Why was not such a definition given ? We have no answer to give but this ; that, in fact, the apostles met that very principle of absolute proprietorship in every existing social relation, and gave it such a formal rebuke in no instance.

It entered into the existing civil government. They expressly recognized the government, and did not condemn the despotism. Yet rulers were not too high a mark for the Gospel to reach.

It entered into the marriage relation. By the Roman law the husband had power "to chastise" the wife according to his "judgment or caprice ; he exercised the jurisdiction of life and death, and it was allowed that in cases of adultery or drunkenness, the sentence might properly be inflicted." The woman was "so clearly defined, not as a person, but as a thing, that she might be claimed like other movables, by the possession of an entire year." (Gibbon's Decline and Fall, Ch. 44.)

By the same law, even "the adult son of a Roman citizen was, in his father's house, a mere thing, confounded by the law with the movables, the cattle, and the slaves, whom the capricious master might alienate or destroy without being responsible to any earthly tribunal." The father's "oxen or children, if stolen, might be recovered by the same action of theft ; and if either had been guilty of a trespass, it was in his (the father's) own option to compensate the damage, or resign to the injured party the obnoxious animal. At the call of indigence or avarice, the master of a family could dispose of his children or slaves ; but the condition of the slave was far more advantageous, since he regained, by the first manumission, his alienated freedom ; but the son was again restored to his unnatural father. He might be condemned to servitude a second and a third time, and it was not till after the third sale and deliverance, that he was enfranchised from the domestic power that had been so repeatedly abused. The majesty of a parent was armed with the power of life and death." (Decline and Fall, Ch. 44.) If any one is startled by these details, and considers them almost incredible, let him

remember that he is less startled by the details of ancient slavery, not because they are less monstrous in themselves, but only because the discussion of the subject, and some of the excesses of existing slavery, have made them more familiar. To the apostles they could not fail to be well known. The Roman law was then the law of the civilized world. Every church, to which an epistle was addressed, was under it. St. Paul himself, though born in Asia Minor, was a Roman citizen.—If the actual abuses, which grew out of such laws, were less numerous than those of slavery, let us consider that natural affection in some degree restrained them. They were not less real, nor less flagrant. Now, such absolute authority over wife or child was as vicious as absolute authority over a servant. But in neither case do we find it formally condemned.

Men may explain this fact as they choose. Our own explanation is simply this: That any formal exposition of the social abuses then existing, would have attacked those abuses, not so much through the consciences of the oppressors, as through the passions of the oppressed. For the apostles to have furnished fuel for a general conflagration, would have been an act sanctioned by no principle of the Gospel, and would have barred effectually and justly the progress of the religion that admitted it. The Gospel had other means of attacking the existing evils, no less direct and honest, but safer, surer, and more speedy. These means the apostles used. If any man chooses to call this policy, he is welcome to his word. Such policy is the noblest exercise of an enlightened mind and conscience. It is right applied to circumstances.

But we are concerned, not with the explanation, but with the fact itself. We have not made it; but we find it. That fact compels all men who revere the Gospel to acknowledge that, in the apostles' regard, there must have been some sufficient way of condemning those notions of absolute power that then perverted every social relation, without resorting to a formal specification and rebuke.

The end might be gained by means of the general laws of the Gospel. In some of the particulars enumerated, it must have been gained through them, or not at all. Fathers are nowhere formally forbidden to sell their sons into slavery, nor hus-

bands to chastise their refractory wives. Yet such customs are held to be clearly condemned by the Gospel, even while it enjoins obedience upon both wives and sons, and recognizes the authority of husbands and fathers. Nay, the friends of slavery, who acknowledge the enormity of some of its features in the apostles' day, cannot find a formal mention and rebuke of those very enormities. A master is nowhere told, in so many words, that he has no right to kill his slaves, or to deny to them the marriage relation, or to make a cruel separation of parents and children. But this lack is thought to be easily supplied. For we are reminded that "the Bible condemns all injustice, cruelty, oppression, and violence." (Princeton Review, Art. Slavery, 1836.) But now that the gates are lifted, and the tide of the Gospel is let in upon the prerogatives of the master, how shall the stream be shut off again? The relations which God has established by universal law may welcome even a flood, which, however it may sweep away the wicked products of man's device, can never touch the everlasting hills. But how shall the principles of slavery survive the shock? The learned and candid writer of the article just now referred to, considers that he has answered the question. He maintains that there is an essence of slavery which the general laws of the Gospel cannot touch, and he thus defines it: "The deprivation of personal liberty, obligation of service at the discretion of another, and the transferable character of the authority and claim of service of the master." He quotes, besides, with apparent approbation, the definition of Paley: "I define slavery to be an obligation to labor for the benefit of the master, without the contract or consent of the servant."

But now, one of two things is true. Slavery, as above defined, either has the full consent and approbation of the general laws of the Gospel, or it has not. If it has, its friends are treating it most unfairly in going about to prove that it only "is not sinful." Who ever heard of an argument among reasonable men to prove that marriage or civil government is not sinful? The very form of the plea, and of the particular arguments that are urged to support it,

confesses, what all disinterested Christendom maintains, that the spirit of the Gospel is averse to a relation, which obliges a servant to labor involuntarily "at the discretion of the master," or "for the master's benefit." Then we demand, upon what ground is the master's prerogative to exact such service, sheltered from the condemnation of the Gospel? It will not be enough to answer, in the language of the reviewer already quoted, that the apostles did not command the masters to set their slaves free. We are discussing, not the fact of bondage, but the principle of it—its strict relations to the master's rights; and, we ask, how is one to discriminate so nicely between the right of a man to punish another at his own caprice, and the right to extort service from another for his own advantage? What so great difference does it make, whether the pain to be inflicted "at the master's discretion" is in the skin that has been wounded with the lash, or in the muscles that have been worn with toil, or in the mind that revolts from the irksome and hopeless task? For labor, as distinguished from cheerful industry, is one most prominent element of the curse upon sin. It is pain, as much as any pain. What right has a man, arbitrarily, to assign to a fellow-man that dispensation of God's justice more than any other? We are told that other forms of pain, besides that of involuntary labor, are not essential to "slavery," and therefore are condemned in general laws. But what is this modern abstraction of "slavery" that presumes to dictate to the Gospel? What is this, with its notions of "the master's benefit" and "the transfer of claims," that it should stand up against the simplest law of Christ? The apostles never heard of such a thing; they never uttered a sentence, or a word, out of which the arbitrary notion could define itself. "Master" and "slave," in their day, so far as they defined any principle at all, were the symbols of absolute power and absolute submission. But the apostles used the words in no such sense. They took them as the familiar designation of an actual relation, for which they made rules, so far from any recognition of the conventional authority, that thousands of shrewd but un-

learned men have studied them, and lived by them, and never thought of slavery. Show us the barrier which the apostles have erected around the master's prerogative. Show us that sacred corner of the domain of despotism, which they have forbidden the Gospel to invade. And the evidence must be, not in the toleration of forms which could not suddenly be changed, nor in the recognition of such authority as the very forms implied ; but in rights that were independent of existing circumstances, and might stand for ever. Till that evidence is produced, let the Gospel do its perfect work. Never fear it. There is no mischief in it. The laws of Christ will never mistake a show of justice, or of love, for the essence. Give them all their scope. God's blessing on what they bless ; there is no blessing on what they forbid. The terms of their decision shall vary with the circumstances, but the principles are fixed and can never change. There were times, indeed, when God suspended his general laws of human love and justice, and made men the direct ministers of his vengeance ; and then a special revelation defined the temporary exception. But he held back his Gospel till the fulness of time, that it might be a perfect law for every age and every place. The cause that is arraigned before that law, has reached the highest court ; there is no appeal from its decision, unless God shall speak from heaven. When that law was announced, every principle of absolute power received its death-blow ; and one rule took the place of all conventional right. It did not unmake facts, but principles. If a slave was dependent and vicious, no announcement of a law of love could suddenly change him ; and while it did not, that very law enjoined the kind of care and control which his case demanded. But a master's right to compel involuntary labor, and for his own benefit, is a principle ; and it is the very province of the Gospel to condemn it. If principles like that had been intended to endure, there would have been no Gospel. All the reasoning in the world cannot avoid this issue. All the conventional names of tyranny that ever were uttered might have concentrated themselves in one, and the apostles might

have had need to use it ; but their lips would have been to it like a refiner's fire. It might have stood thereafter for a symbol of facts, but not of principles. The Gospel would have pronounced upon it.

And now, what form of authority is this, that ventures to expostulate against this universal law ? Not that of civil government, or of the family, which derives itself from God's appointment ; but that of slavery, which, at the most, was only recognized. So many more prerogatives has that relation, which traces back its heathen origin to violence and wrong, than that which is established by the sanction of God.

The fallacy is transparent ; and, if it were not, its friends would make it so. For their inconsistent efforts to define the master's prerogative, confess that they themselves cannot decide, where the Gospel's inroads upon it were arrested. So important a matter as the right to sell the slave, is admitted into one definition and excluded from another. Have the apostles protected that ? and where ? Are there any limitations to that right, if it exists, and if so, what defines them ? Besides, the so-called definitions, even where they agree, leave so much undefined, that the idea is quite incomplete. There is " obligation of service," and no specified right of enforcing the service ; and, if that is implied, what means of compulsion may the right employ, and what measure of compulsion when the means do not easily succeed ? Is all this a question of right, or a question of Gospel duty ? and, if of both, what becomes of the definition of reserved prerogatives ? A father could have no difficulty here, nor could the master of an apprentice, for each of these trace their rights, not beyond the Gospel, but to it—not to some obligation of the apprentice ; or child to labor " for the benefit " of his superior ; but to an obligation that binds both parties, to act for the greatest advantage of both. The common Gospel law controls the whole ; but who shall tell how a man should act in a relation half merciful and half selfish, based upon absolute right, and yet compelled to conform to the rules of love ? No human ethics can define the

incongruous compound. Again, neither of the definitions we have quoted speaks one word of recompense of any form ; are we to understand that remuneration is excluded from the essence of slavery ? Have the apostles carefully prohibited it ? Or if it may enter, is it by permission, or by law ? Has the slave a right to it ? And if so, to how much ? What defines the measure of the uncovenanted justice ? Prerogative or the Gospel ? So, too, of mental and religious training. Has the master a right to withhold either, and if not, how much must he render ? If the Gospel has a voice in all these questions, will it not, at length, trench somewhat seriously upon the master's right to exact service "for his benefit ?" The definitions need to be defined again, and any heart, with the love of Christ in it, that attempts the task, however it may have blinded itself at first with abstract terms and preconceived opinions, will wear upon the sharp and cold prerogative until it melts away like ice before the sun. The result is sure, and there is no help for it. So much of the despotism of the apostles' day, whether of rulers, or parents, or husbands, or masters, as can stand before the spirit of the Gospel, may stand for ever, and so much as cannot survive that fair encounter, has met its doom. No logic can quicken it.

But we take higher ground than this. The apostles have not sent us up and down the Gospel, to gather an estimate of slavery. If they had foreseen this very abstraction of "slavery" that seeks to find countenance from their words, they could not have disclaimed the imputation more pointedly than they did. It is to be observed, that whatever formal limitations of the pretended rights of masters the apostles might make, are to be looked for, not in their addresses to the slaves, but only in their instructions to the masters themselves. The former suffered the wrong, and could not control it ; the power was with the latter. It is remarkable, now, that the whole New Testament, which is so confidently quoted as having approved slavery without ever condemning it, contains but two isolated passages of instructions to masters. Neither of these is intended to confer power ; both of them limit it. The phrase-

ology, indeed, is not adapted to inflame the passions of the slaves, but yet it is so distinct in its condemnation of the essence of slavery, that the most restricted definition of it cannot stand before either passage for a moment.

The first of these is: Col. 4: 1.—“Masters, give unto your slaves that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven.” No man can doubt that these words were intended to assail the common injustice and cruelty which entered into the treatment of slaves; together with that idea of the master’s authority, out of which such treatment grew. It is to be observed, that the apostle aimed to correct the evil by enjoining, not kindness, as he might upon the owner of property, but justice and equity as upon the master of a man. The words are worth noticing. The first word “just” is the same that is used twice in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, Matt. 20. “Whatever is right I will give you;” where the idea is of just remuneration for work done. And the word, wherever used, never loses its primary idea of justice. The other word is a noun, literally meaning “equality,” and is used but three times, in the New Testament. The other two instances are in 2 Cor. 8, 14. “For I mean not (v. 13) that other men be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance may be a supply for your want, that there may be an equality.” The word then covers the idea of an exact proportion between two things; in the passage in Cor., between the gifts of one church at one time, and of another church at another; in the passages before us, between the “giving” of the master and the sacrifices of the slave. That we may not seem to be relying too confidently upon the meaning of a word so seldom employed, take the following example, of the meaning of the adjectives from which the noun in question is derived. In that parable in Matt. already quoted, some of the laborers complain in regard to the rest, “Thou hast made them equal to us which have borne,” &c. In Luke 6, 34, lenders are spoken of who expect “to receive as much again.” There are no other instances of the use of the word, in which this idea of exact equality is

in the least degree lost. By the use of such terms, we insist, the apostle attacked directly the idea of a master's right to extort from the slave any services for which the slave should not receive, in some form, a full equivalent. If there is an error in this interpretation, it must be here ; that we regard the apostle as speaking of absolute justice and equal dealing ; whereas, he was speaking of what it was fit and proper a slave should receive. To this we will not answer that he spoke without qualification, and that he placed the two parties before God as their judge. But we will adopt the phraseology proposed. Little change will it make in the meaning of the verse, for fitness is not opposed to justice, nor distinct from it ; but is justice itself, adapted to circumstances. Thus, an employer may receive service from a journeyman and from an apprentice. It is just, that he reward them both. It is fitting, that he reward the apprentice by instruction and general care, and the journeyman with wages. No man can describe any relation, permanent or contingent, in which, under the law of God, any act can be counted fit and proper, that is not essentially just. Circumstances may vary ; and that is only a pretended justice that does not make a full account of them. But when they have all been estimated, and the fitting course of action has been defined, it is absolute justice that pronounces the verdict. No government is entitled to a tittle of the goods or service of its subject upon any other score than that of a just remuneration ; though it may be fitting, that the remuneration shall take this form, or that. The same is true of husband and wife, of parents and children, and of the parties in every conceivable, honest relation. Fitness may, in every case, decide the shape which the reciprocal justice is to assume, it can never impair the amount of it. In truth, there is only one conceivable instance in which what is just or proper or fit, can tend to any thing less than the true advantage of him to whom it is rendered ; and that is the case of a criminal to whom justice is punishment ; and even then, so far as the punishment is remedial, the justice is beneficent. Nay, the very pain of his exemplary punishment has been compensated in the security which he has previously enjoyed, under the

very law that inflicts it.* Why shall a slave be put down, not to the level of a criminal, but beneath it, as Dr. How needs to do, in his strained analogy between a master and a judge? Why should the master of an innocent man be entitled to do "at his discretion," what the highest judge of the land, with all the authority of civil and divine law to back him, cannot do to the vilest criminal; namely, impose in the name of justice, restrictions and pains deserved by no fault of the sufferer, and in no way tending to his advantage? The thing is monstrous. It is a solecism in morals. It is an innovation in language even. Let those Christian reasoners, who suffer themselves to hold that, in slavery, justice or fitness is entitled not only to decide the form of the slave's remuneration, but to limit the amount of it, show a warrant for the pretence. The exception, if it exist, is a broad one. Let us have it defined in fair, plain terms. A cloudy argument from the sufferance of a mere form, when the very justice that is impugned demanded the preservation of that form, will not meet the necessity. We need proof as strong as the proof of a miracle; and stronger; for God has often suspended, for a while, the laws of nature; but this claims a perpetual perversion of his law of morals. Such a case is unheard of, and many men will refuse to believe in it upon any testimony. Till the conclusive proof is brought, the clear words of the apostle, the analogy of our religion, and the very character of God, demand for slaves as for other men, what is absolutely just and equal. Such a demand upon the apostle's lips, did not require that the unprovided slave should be dismissed to freedom, and destruction; it was the very province of justice to forbid such an act. It had no reference to some sudden system of wages. While it bound the conscience of the mas-

* "The lawfulness of putting a malefactor to death arises from this; the law by which he is punished, was made *for his security*. A murderer for instance, has enjoyed the benefit of the very law which condemns him; it has been a continual protection to him; he cannot therefore object against it. But it is not so with the slave. The law of slavery can never be beneficial to him; it is in all cases against him, without ever being for his advantage, and therefore this law is contrary to the fundamental principles of all societies."—*Montesquieu. Spirit of Laws, Book 15, Chapter 2.*

ter to its absolute rule, it could not but leave him a large discretion in applying the rule. But it was to be justice still. Under such a rule, the true advantage of the slave counts just as much as the true advantage of the master. There are no superior rights for the latter to throw into his scale for a make-weight. In any real or apparent collision between the interests of the two, the difficulty is to be resolved, not by the power of the strongest, but by justice to be rendered in the sight of God. There is only one way, in which a system of slavery can maintain its essence in the face of such a rule ; and that is by proving its express divine warrant. Mosaic slavery would never have been disturbed by it ; but Roman slavery could hardly hold out so well. The whole heart of that unauthorized system was taken out of it by that single text.

The other passage referred to, is in Eph. 6 : 9, where the apostle having exhorted slaves to act toward their masters "as unto Christ" and "as to the Lord," "doing the will of God from the heart," and anticipating a just judgment, adds, "and ye masters do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your master also is in Heaven, neither is there any respect of persons with him." The Greek phrase for 'respect of persons' is an exact translation of a Hebrew phrase, very common in the Old Testament. The origin of it, is thought to have been in the habit of kings to receive with complaisance such suitors as brought them presents ; but whatever may have been its origin and occasional use, it was the current phrase with the Old Testament writers for describing partiality upon the part of a judge. Thus in Lev. 19 : 15, it is said : "Thou shalt do no unrighteousness in judgment, thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the rich ;" where the meaning evidently is, that the cause of the poorest or of the richest is to be decided equally by absolute justice. In Deut. 10 : 17, 18, the expression is associated with the name of God. "For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger in giving him

food and raiment." In Job 34 : 19, God is again described as one that "accepteth not the persons of princes nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands." The phrase is common in the New Testament, and retains the same intrinsic idea of partiality at the expense of justice or truth. But the passages quoted from the Old Testament are more exactly parallel with that before us, since they speak of God in his character of judge, and remind men in a position of power, that he will deal with them, and the subjects of their power, by the rules of an exact justice.

The words can have no other meaning here ; for St. Paul at least intended to teach the masters whom he addressed that, in some particular, God, in the final judgment, would set them upon a level with their slaves. He could not have referred to the mere fact of judgment, for no Christian master needed to be told so solemnly that both he, and his slave should, in fact, be judged. Then he must have referred to the principles upon which the judgment should proceed ; and these are nothing less than justice, embodied in God's standing law. Now, there was at that time an assumption of prerogative upon the part of masters, well known to all men, to which this language of the apostle most naturally opposed itself. And, if silence is so mighty an argument, let it this time serve the cause of mercy. We look for some reservation—some saving clause—some little remnant of the factitious authority that may survive the general overthrow. But not a word. The apostle batters the very principle of slavery, but provides no defender for it. He deals the destructive blow, but lifts no hand to sustain a beam of the tottering fabric. The whole superstructure of the master's prerogative fell together. The external relation was intended to remain. For under the circumstances justice approved it. The language assaults nothing but a principle, like that of slavery. Parent and child, ruler and subject, may stand before the impartial Judge with equal acceptance. The rich man, or the strong man, who has used his wealth, or his strength, for the glory of God, and the welfare of men, may share in a blessing with the meek of the earth. The conscientious master who has

sought to fulfil to the ignorant and degraded victims of past oppression, the perfect law of love, may meet the very commendation of him who remembers the benefactor of the least of his brethren. But the man who employs a master's prerogative in wilfully abating God's common law of love and justice, if he has hope for that day, must stand alone. He lives and must be judged by a special law. That God, who is no respecter of persons, must respect him beyond all men, or he shall surely be condemned.

But the testimony of the apostles may grow plainer. Surely it would, if we could follow them in their intercourse with particular masters, and know the spirit of those daily instructions, in which they adapted general laws to specific cases. But the detailed history that might furnish this information is wanting, and there is just one instance in the whole New Testament in which an apostle gives a slaveholder direct advice concerning his slaveholding ; and that is the case of Philemon already referred to. There are two features in that case ; the agency of the apostle in the return of Onesimus ; and the instructions given to his master in regard to his reception, and subsequent treatment. We have already noticed the first of these ; let us now notice the second. The terms of those instructions are sufficiently striking. "Thou therefore receive him, that is my own bowels." (v. 12.) No reader of the Bible needs to be told that in its figurative language, "the bowels" represented the seat of the gentler affections, and thus those affections themselves ; just as "the heart" does in ours, and that this appeal must have sounded in the ear of Philemon just as it would sound in ours, if the latter expression were substituted for the former.—"For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever ; not now as a slave, but above a slave, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord." (vs. 15, 16.) The brotherly affection which these expressions enjoin, might possibly, by a perversion of the apostle's meaning, have been limited to some intangible religious emotion, quite dissociated from a direct interest in the personal welfare of Onesimus ; and to

forestall that gross mistake, the words are added "*both in the flesh*, and in the Lord."—Again, we have this significant language. "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself." (v. 17.) The word "partner," though a strict translation of the original expression, does not immediately suggest its full meaning. Partners in business or pleasure were thrown much into each other's company, and so partner came to mean companion. This meaning of the word will not be questioned ; and the absolute use which is made of it here, requires that signification. The reference in that case, however, is to religious fellowship, and thus the apostle makes his own true Christian equality with Philemon, describe the reception and permanent treatment which he demanded for Onesimus. Now no reasonable and candid man can refuse to admit that all these were the expressions of warm feeling, and therefore are not to be pressed to their most extensive meaning. The future life of Onesimus was not intended to be that of a pet, who should have the freedom of Philemon's mansion, and a right to its comforts, with no work to do ; but the expressions surely meant something, and the contrast in which the apostle placed them, plainly showed how much they meant. "Not now as a slave, but above a slave, a brother beloved, etc." It was clearly the design of the apostle Paul to relieve Onesimus from just so much of slavery, as was inconsistent with a regard of his character and person, identical with that which was due to the apostle himself. Such a rule would not interfere with the mere form of slaveholding. If the object of all this true sympathy, needed or chose, for any sufficient reason, to bind himself to the person or household of a master, and to serve him, such a relation might be consistent with the highest Christian regard and the most affectionate interest. But no man, who for his own advantage, restricts another's liberty, and compels his services, can by any ingenuity bring his conduct into harmony with these expressions.

The friends of slavery insist upon the apostle's agency in returning Onesimus, as a rule to be followed. With infinitely greater justice do we insist upon his counsel to

Philemon, as a rule. For the return of a slave to such a master, and under the circumstances which then existed, was surely something less than a declaration that the apostle would send back any slave, to any master, at any time ; and therefore as we have seen already, fell far short of an unequivocal approval of slavery. But will any one tell us how it came to pass, if slavery in itself was just and proper, that such a slave as Onesimus was made the subject of such an interference ? If this case was the exception, then where was the rule, and on what ground was the exception made ? So much as this is evident.

1. The apostle did not write as he did, from mere solicitude lest the returning slave should be punished for his fault. To that risk he alludes in verses that are complete in themselves, and which we have not, as yet, quoted. "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it. Albeit, I do not say to thee, how thou owest unto me, even thine own self besides." (vs. 18, 19.) More than this, the rule which he gave, was not for the mere reception of Onesimus, but for "receiving him *for ever*" (ἀιώνιον) ; "no longer (ὀυκέτι) as a slave, but above a slave." And to this strong language, the apostle added the expression of his confidence that Philemon would even exceed the terms of his request. "Knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say." (v. 21.) Does this establishment of Onesimus "for ever," upon a footing above a slave, with this anticipation of some greater benefit for him, which even the significant terms employed had not described, warrant the representation that is given in the argument we are reviewing, of Paul, in awe of Philemon's "rights" and in fear of the "excesses of his passion and resentment," "using entreaties" "for his poor runaway slave, Onesimus?" and is not that argument somewhat beside the evidence, when it ventures to assert, that Onesimus after his return, was "a better slave?" Is the author quite sure that that undefined act at which the apostle hints, was not intended to be the earliest proper enfranchisement of the "brother beloved?"

2. There was nothing in the character of Philemon to demand from the apostle a special care to soften the excessive rigors of his slaveholding. There are no terms of kind regard, and hearty Christian commendation, that can exceed those which the apostle addresses to this good man. Let one read the Epistle, and he cannot but be struck with them.

3. There was nothing in the accomplishments of Onesimus, that made him more than another, a candidate for indulgence. He was not only a slave, but a slave in a menial position. He was not a merchant, or a mechanic, or an artist, but he was a house-servant. (See the note at the end of the Epistle.) If he had remained at Rome, he would have been a body-servant of Paul. There is no hint that he was to be employed by Philemon in any higher capacity.

One thing only was there to distinguish him. He was a Christian, converted under the apostle's influence, and so, by a figure which the apostle commonly applied to such converts, he was called his "son." As for that exemplary temper and conduct, of which the argument before us speaks, the Epistle gives us no hint of it. So far as we can know, he stood in the regard of Paul, upon the very same footing with any other slaves who might have been converted by his instrumentality. True, he had absconded from his master, and others had not; but that could scarcely be counted a title to distinguished kindness. And therefore we ask; What reason can be imagined why every word of the apostle in regard to him, should not apply equally to every Christian slave of a Christian master? Nay, how far should these Christian distinctions limit the word? for the rule of the apostle is, "As ye have opportunity, do good unto all men." If the "household of faith" has a special claim to kindness, all the rest have claim enough.

Those who may oppose this view, and insist upon the limitation of the apostle's counsel to the particular case of Onesimus, have a strange account to give of an Epistle that has found its place in the canon of the New Testament. It must have been the product of a sudden impulse of kindness toward a single man, embodying no general principle, estab-

lishing no standing rule ; with that one sacred exception, that a runaway slave is to be sent back to his master. Inspiration for once was mere blind sympathy, and constrained a tender-hearted apostle to modify for one particular slave, a relation which, under another kind of inspiration, he had approved for thousands. Then how many acts under God's immediate suggestion, does it need to establish a principle ? We consider, that when the essential circumstances are the same, one example from God is final, and demands universal imitation.

It is possible, now, to think of only one plausible reason for refusing to these expressions the extended scope which we claim for them, and that is this : That if the constant advice, which the apostles were accustomed to give to Christian masters concerning their slaveholding, had been of this same tenor, there would have been no need for St. Paul to insist upon that advice in this letter ; or, to state the objection most strongly ; Does not the very exhortation to receive Onesimus " not as a slave," imply that he had absconded as a slave, and thus exclude the possibility of any habitual and formal interference upon the apostle's part even with the principle of slavery ? To this we reply, that however fully and distinctly St. Paul, or his brethren, might have condemned the principle of slavery, such an act as the returning of Onesimus, though the exigencies of the times demanded and justified it, might be thoughtlessly taken as a retraction of that condemnation and an indorsement, not only of the necessity of slaveholding, but of the master's prerogative. How many have so regarded the act, needs not be said. It is not fair, then, where the repetition of certain truths was clearly demanded, to make such repetition a proof that they had not been uttered before. Upon the supposition that the whole substance of this Epistle had been heard by Philemon again and again, and fairly acted upon, how could a single word of it have been spared, since, even in spite of its emphasis, so many hold its meaning to be equivocal ? But, in truth, we do not doubt, that this very Epistle did contain a clearer distinction between the master's mere authority and his prerogative, than

Philemon had been accustomed to hear. One chief design of the whole Bible is to reduce general rules to such detail as may explain them to the Church in every age. And it is no fair objection to a distinct definition of a particular duty, to wonder why the whole was not clearly understood before. The Gospel was new. Men's thoughts were formed upon the model of heathenism. It needed line upon line, and the whole Bible is to reduce general rules to such detail as precept upon precept. And the Epistle to Philemon did not come so late in the church's history, that all the limits of truth and duty, must be supposed to have been settled in men's minds before it. If they had been, it would never have been written. The Bible is not filled with rubbish ; it is meant to teach something. And thus, we have no difficulty in admitting, that though the general Gospel had defined the matter, Philemon, before the reception of this Epistle, might not quite have understood it. If he, and all men, have not understood it since, it is not the apostle's fault.

And now we insist, as before, that of all the New Testament, these three directions to masters are the only expressions that did, or by possibility could, recognize the principle of a master's prerogative, either to condemn it or approve it. There was no didactic description of slavery. Such a thing, indeed, might have resolved all doubts. But there were only these three addresses to masters, and perhaps twice as many addresses to slaves. The latter recognized authority, and enjoined obedience. We admit it cheerfully. But with what propriety would the basis, and nature, and limits of that authority come into discussion with those who neither created it, nor exerted it, nor could possibly resist it ? If it rested upon this principle, and not upon that ; if these were its limits, and such were its excesses, was an address to slaves to incorporate such a homily ? Upon the other hand, is it not a fact, that the apostle Peter, in addressing slaves, recognized the irresponsible power that might inflict the most unjust punishments, and, though he indirectly condemned the injustice, said not a word to limit such power, and even enjoined submission to the whole ? Does this sound like a thesis

upon the divine rights of slaveholders? A similar question may be asked concerning that other address to slaves, which presupposes an abuse of the master's power in the imposition of the "yoke" of slavery. 1 Tim. 6. 1. But turn to those other expressions. Now those who hold the power are receiving instruction. Now you may expect analysis and distinctions—not of human ethics, indeed, but of God's truth, which measures the terms of his commands as carefully as those of his doctrines. In every one of them you have authority, the very counterpart of the slave's obedience. In every one of them, too, you have restrictions which bind down that authority, by the very terms, and to the very limits of Gospel love and justice. Here is the fountain of a master's power, where God has fixed it. And now the stream may rise as high as it can. Let it flow, and it shall carry blessing. It shall

"follow the valley's playful windings,
Curve round the cornfield and the hill of vines,
Honoring the holy bounds of property."

But if there are any dark waves that cover the lowliest territory of human hope and happiness, they have issued from some other source.

If these passages cannot bear the obvious interpretation which we have put upon them, some mischievous fatality must forbid that Gospel, which befriends all other men, to befriend the slave. We quote its standing laws in his behalf, and they cannot serve him; for they are too general. We quote the only particular laws that could assail the master's prerogative, and find in them the most direct and forcible language that tongue can use; and now the words are too direct, and it cannot be they were intended to mean so much. It cannot be that the apostle demands "justice and equal dealing," in the natural meaning of the words, or insists upon the master's and slave's absolute equality of right in the sight of God, or enjoins every Christian master of a Christian slave to count him "not a slave, but above a slave." Why not? Would such a meaning clash with any other expressions of the Epistles? Not at all. Can the words bear any other intelligible meaning? We cannot discover it. Would the

meaning, upon which we insist, harm any one? No; we have put it at the very level of the Gospel. While others are insisting upon just one exception to God's universal law of justice, and making our religion a patchwork, we are insisting that it is "without seam, woven from the top throughout." General terms and particular, all rank themselves on our side. Upon the other, not a word of the whole New Testament; there only stands between us, a fact of slavery, which the Gospel could not unmake, and the necessary form of which, the Gospel changed from a curse into a blessing. And if that necessary fact has such a subtle power as to enervate every law that is uttered, not against it, but against the monstrous principle that used to lurk within it; alas for the slave! The apostles did their best to serve him; they uttered strong words; but sin had barricaded itself behind its deeds, and they could not reach it;—a strange weakness for that Gospel which God appointed to be a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Here, it would seem, the evidence must end; for we have confessed that the addresses to the slaves might be expected to be silent upon the principles of slavery. But, in fact, utter silence was quite impossible. For how should one enjoin patience, and not recognize the trial that demanded it? For example, how would the sympathizing and cheering expression "care not for it," sound in an address to the subject of any authority that was lawful in itself, and intended to be permanent? Conceive of another similar expression addressed to children or wives, coupled with counsel to embrace the first lawful opportunity to sunder the existing relations. Again, how could a man, with a Christian heart in his bosom, speak of a "yoke" imposed by human hands, and not condemn them for their guilty service? How could the helpless subjects of oppression be pointed for comfort and courage to the example of him, who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he was rebuked, threatened not," and the means of their oppression still be approved? All these expressions of sympathy, indeed, concern the slaves, not of Christian masters, but of others; and, therefore, may be said to refer to

an abuse of the master's prerogative. But had the apostles no sentiment concerning the prerogative itself, that could be so easily abused? And, since the forms of slavery needed to exist, is it most consistent with these expressions to believe that they warranted that prerogative in all the hands that held it; or, so far as their law could go, overthrow it entirely, to place in its stead the law of justice and love? Nay, the very injunctions of respect and obedience which are addressed to the Christian slaves of Christian masters, imply distinctly that the master's prerogative was, upon the face of it, inconsistent with the Gospel. 1 Tim. 6, 2.—“And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren.” What is this but the plainest admission, that recognized Christian brotherhood naturally tended to unmake the distinction of master and slave? As for any reference to the seventh year of freedom taken out of the Jewish law, and to the possible Judaizers who might have insisted on the analogy, and so unsettled the minds of the slaves, all the commentators in the world cannot make the guess any thing but gratuitous, while they go on to confess—what Dr. Howe omits to quote with that other part of the same note—“that it was natural for persons so ignorant as slaves to regard the Gospel as freeing men from all obligations intrinsically and fundamentally inconsistent with justice and equity.”—(Bloomfield, in loc.) It will be time enough for the Pentateuch to elucidate the mystery when the Gospel has failed. The mistake was a very natural one, then. And how does the apostle rectify it? One word would have settled the matter for them and for us, if he could only have uttered it. What disputes and heartburnings that have disturbed and do disturb the church and the nations, would have been precluded by that one word, prerogative. Let him say for Christian masters what he did not hesitate to say even for heathen rulers; “the powers that be are ordained of God.” But no such word; in place of it, only this: “But rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.” As though he had said, since the relation exists, and must exist, and any attempt of Christian slaves to sunder it, would only

cause "the name of God and his doctrine to be blasphemed," as though our religion interfered with the most necessary relations ; do you, who have Christian masters, bear your burden with double cheerfulness, since you are permitted to serve those who are brethren and masters, at once. The difficulty and the resolution of it equally exclude the idea of the master's divine and standing right. Let one change the terms from "master and slave" to those of "parent and child," and see what a medley the passage would become. Any relation formally ordained of God would be degraded immeasurably by being made the subject of such an exhortation. The whole passage has the air of the Saviour's address to John the Baptist, "Suffer it to be so now."

We have thus gone through the New Testament, carefully and candidly, and we have found the fact of slavery regulated, when it could not be suddenly destroyed. The principle of it, we have found nowhere ; but the condemnation of that principle, we meet on every side. Not a word is said to a master, that does not condemn it expressly. Scarcely a word to a slave, that does not imply its condemnation. And the whole law of love and justice disclaims the presumptuous affinity.

But our opponents have one plea remaining. We claim that only the form of slavery was tolerated ; and that, only for a time, and as a preparation for the speediest possible emancipation of the slaves. And we will be told that the apostles evidently had no anticipation of a speedy abolition of slavery ; that they counted so fully upon its lasting, that they gave no law even for the ultimate liberation of the slaves, nor yet for the particular emancipation of such as might be able to care for themselves ; that the modern opposers of slavery would have done all this, and are accustomed to regret that the apostles failed to do it. How other opposers of slavery may regard the apostles' action in these particulars, we can hardly say : but, for ourselves, we are heartily contented with it as we find it. If they judged that the end of the existing slavery was not near, they judged as any wise man might have judged, even with no inspiration to

enlighten him ; and the facts bore out their judgment. What prospective rule of general emancipation could have been given, when, under the most favorable circumstances, such emancipation was not to be possible for centuries to come ? And what particular rules of manumission could they give to Christian masters, without a detail of conditions and exceptions as long as an epistle ? Let any one who has noticed the ground taken in the present argument, prepare a particular definition of cases for immediate emancipation, which one who takes that ground might present to-day to the masters of the South. It would need as many pages as these to contain them ; there would have to be a consideration of the health and character and age of the slave ; of the condition of his family ; of his prospect of a livelihood ; and, added to these, a consideration of the master's ability to dispense with his slave's services. For while we utterly disclaim the idea of ownership in a man, we admit the claim of service ; which stands by the very fact that the forms of slavery cannot be abolished, and which, by the conscientious care of a Christian master over one who needs that care, acquires the sanction of justice. Where slavery exists, the master who has done his full duty towards his slave, has a claim of duty in return. And where the two find themselves in that relation, equally without and against their choice, it is preposterous to set the interests of the one at zero, and to make the interests of the other infinite. They stand upon a level ; the master is just one man, and the slave another. Liberty which the slave desires is one blessing ; the bread of his own children, which a disabled master might need to sacrifice in bestowing that liberty, is another. It is not a plain case that where slave and children have shared in faithful care and instruction for years, a particular interest of the former should swallow up as great an interest of the latter. They stand upon a level. The master's real welfare counts as much as the slave's real welfare ; and every interest upon either side, stands as the value of the same interest upon the other. Comfort against comfort, liberty against liberty, life against life. Let comfort, or liberty, or life, on either side,

yield to any interest, that by the common laws of Christian morality, might demand the sacrifice. But who would attempt to graduate the difficult estimate? Who will tell, by rule, just how much of suffering the innocent master should be willing to endure, in order to restore liberty to the innocent slave? A man might make rules till he was gray, and then one simple efficient rule would comprehend and override them all; and that would be the gospel rule, of doing unto others as we would that others should do unto us. Not that rule, with that exception that makes a slave less protected than a criminal. But that rule, as it stands and means, with no possible exception in the whole circle of morals. "Change places with the sufferer," says the Saviour, "and look at justice indeed, but from his side. Make the most, not of your rights, even if they be real; never fear that they will lose any of their proportions; but make the most of his, and act accordingly." That rule is safe in the jury box and on the bench. And that was the apostles' rule of emancipation; we ask no better or clearer one now.—But the demand is still reiterated, why did they not even mention the word emancipation? Perhaps for the same reason that inclined them to condemn insubordination in the slaves; the mere word, without the long details of limitation, would have fostered a spirit of restiveness that was already strong enough, and would have done mischief instead of good. St. Paul clearly alluded to it in that expression already quoted, "if thou mayest be free." But we do not care to insist upon the allusion; for now we ask the question, why should the apostles mention emancipation? Was the liberation of slaves in their day such an unheard of thing, that to speak of slavery, without immediately speaking of manumission, was to tighten the chains beyond the hope of loosening them? Of what are men thinking? Excessive emancipation was one of the very vices of society. The multiplication of indigent and vicious slaves by that process had become so great in the age of Augustus, which just preceded that of the apostles, that he had established a law forbidding any man to liberate by testament more than one fifth of his slaves, and suffering the number thus manumitted,

in no instance to exceed one hundred. Under such circumstances, were the apostles bound to set emancipation on foot, as a Christian novelty? There was emancipation enough, and too much. Emancipation of the sick, and the old, and the insane, and the helpless. It wanted not increase, but direction; and just that the Gospel and the whole Gospel only could give it.

It remains, then, that we test the justness of the views we have advanced, by tracing, as far as we can, the actual impression which the Gospel made upon slavery. Any sudden results could hardly be looked for in the days of the apostles. The same circumstances that constrained them to tolerate the forms of slavery continued to exist. And it was only as the Christian religion spread through the empire, and reached its high places, that it could be expected to produce any marked effects. Even then, if the church, that admitted so many errors and occasions of strife, had been quite united and earnest in behalf of emancipation—a thing of which we have no proof—the times were not ripe, and heathen influences still checked the energies of the Gospel. Under such unfavorable circumstances, facts like these are significant of the Gospel's tendency. Constantine, the first emperor who bore the name of a Christian, placed the wilful murder of a slave, which had hitherto been regarded only as an injury to the master, upon a level with that of a freeman; thus striking one blow upon the previous notion that a slave was a mere chattel. The same emperor passed laws to prevent the separation of the families of slaves; another encroachment upon the master's idea of property. In the reign of Theodosius, slaves, who had in former times been suffered to find temporary asylums from their enraged masters in religious places, were entitled to invoke from their retreat the intervention of judicial authority; a direct assault upon the master's prerogative. They were even permitted to remain for ever within the sacred precincts to which they had fled; the master could not reach them; and the ecclesiastics were under obligations to care for them—a beautiful personification of the majesty and pity of the Gospel sheltering the

wretched, with their embrace, from evils which as yet they could not cure. Manumission received some encouragement from different Christian emperors. Yet, in spite of their action, the Emperor Justinian, in coming to the throne, found the process encumbered with so many difficulties, the results of the former legislation of Augustus and others, that the elevation of a slave to the full condition of a citizen was almost impossible. He passed laws that removed all those existing obstacles, and empowered masters to bestow upon their slaves, by a single act, all the advantages of a free-born subject. It needed only that his liberal and Christian policy should have been imitated by his successors, and slavery must have speedily expired throughout the empire. But his successors were not like him; and very soon all interests of civilization and religion were swallowed up in those well-known influences that introduced the Dark Ages. Thus, slavery, in many European nations, lasted on, until, after the return of better times, the religion of the Gospel "had diffused through the earth such a spirit of mildness, gentleness, mercy, and humanity, that the heavy chains of personal slavery were gradually broken in most parts of the Christian world, and they that had been, for so many ages, bruised by the cruel and oppressive hand of Pagan masters, were at length set free."* So that, in our day, not a nation nor a community, that calls itself Christian, can be found, the world over, that retains the least vestige of that system of bondage, or that longs for its return. Neither Europe nor America would tolerate the thought of it for a moment. If the slavery of Ephesus or Colosse were to lift its head, to-day, in Charleston or Savannah, our whole nation would join in the horror which all Christendom would feel at the spectacle. For that New Testament slavery was not the slavery of another race, but of our very equals, possibly, in not a few instances, of our forefathers. The same complexion, the same features, the same native talents and energy,

* Bishop Porteus, quoted in Blair on Roman Slavery; from which last-named author the facts just recited have been chiefly drawn.

belonged to the man that bore the yoke, as to him that bound it on. White slaves filled the market-places and the counting-rooms ; white slaves were the merchants, and artificers, and bankers. Restore that slavery in our land, and the men of our own blood, whose energy and skill control our commerce, should be slaves ; the architect, whose taste designs our edifices, should be a slave ; the teachers of our youth might be slaves ; and the poet, whose numbers delight and improve us, might be a slave. Christianity has done too much in the world to suffer the shameful inconsistency to be possible. And so the slavery, which the Gospel found, is gone, and the Gospel has destroyed it. It has not come down to our day, with the blessing of holy hands upon it. The apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ did not take that heathen monster and set it in his own chariot, that it might ride with him through all the nations, and mingle its triumphs of wrath with his triumphs of mercy. The libel defeats itself. It is a falsehood upon the face of it.

Yet here, in these later days, has sprung up another slavery of a degraded race ; and when reason and common pity frown on the outrage, the slavery of New Testament times must be summoned to prove it right. Let that slavery plead for *itself*, and then let it plead for another. Make the pattern good, before you excuse the copy. But what do we hear ? New Testament slavery was right, yet it was not right, but it proves another slavery right. The apostles meant that it should last, but in truth it has not lasted, and it would be a shame to humanity if it had lasted, but it is a clear warrant for African slavery. What mongrel interpretation is this ! Why has African slavery so suddenly absorbed all the sanction of the Gospel to itself ? Now we hear of the curse upon Canaan, which has no more to do with the people of Africa than with the people of China. There is not an ethnologist living who dares declare that one of the descendants of Canaan is in slavery in America to-day ; and if the race retains the energy of some of their forefathers, among whom were the Phœnicians, there are few

that would venture, equal handed, to make slaves of them, wherever they may be found. Then we hear of the inferiority of the race—a sufficient motive with a Christian people for extending to them sympathy, but very scanty proof of superior rights. Besides, the Gospel pattern, so confidently quoted, was to take the best. The kindred of our British forefathers were slaves in Rome. Are not we as good as the Romans, and why should we be contented with the poorest? Since we have authority for it, why shall we not take our choice? So far as the New Testament is concerned, what reason can be thought of, that warranted the lading of the slave ships of the sixteenth century upon the coast of Africa, that would not have warranted a foray among the mountains of Circassia?

Science takes up the challenge, and comes in to the aid of hermeneutics. The Africans, in truth, have a separate origin and are not our brethren at all; they are just as widely different from white men as dogs are from wolves. The declaration of Paul, that “God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of all the earth,” is not to stand against the recent discoveries; and so, in some men’s minds, the tottering argument stands firm again; one foot on the New Testament, and the other upon that kind of science that laughs the New Testament to scorn. Let the incongruous pedestal be carefully watched, or the image may fall. The whole thing is too absurd for reasoning. There is a sense in every unprejudiced bosom that looks straight through the flimsy argument. A disinterested man could not use it. The mind that does not perceive its weakness, even while it attempts to frame it, must be blinded by interest or passion, or at least by that more amiable influence that prompts a generous heart to excuse the conduct of those whom it may venerate and love.

Nay, a Christian mind, however it may defend the cause, is sure to confess judgment at last; for it is the constant practice with such, while they deny that slavery is sinful, to acknowledge with Dr. Howe, that it is “an evil much to be lamented.” (p. 6.) The admission, be it noticed, does not concern

the acknowledged enormities of slavery ; but that same restricted essence of slavery, which is claimed to be no sin. We ask then, does the admission concern the mere fact of slavery, or the principle of slavery as well ? If both, then the case is yielded ; for a principle that is evil in any possible sense, has no warrant from God, and is sinful. Just that, we claim, is the truth in regard to one man's pretended right, to compel the service of another man for the benefit of the first. But if the fact of slavery is an evil, and the principle is right, then we are brought to a discovery in morals—that an innocent principle may uniformly produce a mischievous result. Our Saviour recognized no such doctrine when he said, a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. How can it be that slavery is one of “the bitter effects of the fall, and of the great wickedness of men” (p. 19), and that God still tolerates it with the consent of his Gospel ? Is God's law for men an agent of curses, or of blessings ? Does it make it right “to do good, or to do evil, to save life or to kill ?” True, there may be evils which a man only endures, and these are no sins. Thus, poverty is an evil ; but what shall we say of one who makes his neighbor poor ? And death is an evil ; but what shall we say of him who attacks his neighbor's life ? It is, in one sense, a terrible evil for a class of men to be “ignorant, unprincipled, and immoral ;” but what shall we say of a system that is adapted to make them so ? How much nursing does an evil need to make it a sin ? Shall a man without a tittle of divine authority, appoint himself an executor of God's judgments ? Is the justice of heaven a monopoly for a favored class, to pay them a percentage ? The tide of suffering that sweeps over our earth is already broad enough ; woe to the man who swells it, to make it the stream that shall turn his mill. Woe to the man, that dares to plow up the surface of our common humanity, and sow his seeds of “evil” amid tears and blood, that they may grow him a crop of dollars. Take off that terrible prerogative of slavery. Place the interests of a slave, as far as possible, like

those of another man, within the keeping of his own energies and of the providence of God. Give to him that which is just and equal ; and then, when he suffers, our pity for him will be unmixed with condemnation of another. But for those men who bind up heavy burdens and lay them on other men's shoulders, to talk of the allotments of Providence, and of evils that are not sins, is an impertinence hard to be endured.

The truth, as we regard it, is more consistent. We deny, with indignation, that the apostles of our Saviour tolerated any evil ; whether in the shape of slavery or any other. They were concerned simply with duty ; and duty, wherever performed, is only right and good. They found a system of slavery that was a curse ; *that* they never tolerated. They dealt with the mere forms of it, and subjected them to such regulations as made them the very reparation of the previous wrong. There was one body of slavery, but it had two separate souls ; the first was the terrible prerogative of the masters, and with that in it, slavery was evil, and only evil, and that continually. But the Gospel, that makes strange conversions, took that hard and stony heart out of it, and gave it a heart of flesh. And so far only did the Gospel approve it. In the case of wicked masters who would not submit to its rules, it tolerated slavery as it tolerated any other form of oppression ; it inculcated patience. In the hands of Christian masters, slavery was an agent for a particular result. The result was important, and no other agent could take its place ; and so far it was good. Liberty indeed, with the conditions that fitted for it, would have been better still ; just as health is better than convalescence. Yet convalescence is not an evil ; the evils that are in it belong to the sickness, and they are not tolerated, but attacked.

A man may take this ground, of the temporary necessity of the forms of slavery, and condemn the principle of it ; or, he may uphold the righteousness and excellence of the whole system : and in either case may be consistent, and not condemn the apostles for tolerating slavery. But for a man to confess that slavery is an evil, and then to represent the

apostles, not only as not condemning it, but as sanctioning the very principle that sustains it, is either to make a most imprudent concession ; or to hold strange views of the office of an apostle. Our opponents must abandon one position or the other. No mortal proportions are competent to occupy them both. They admit so promptly that slavery is an evil, and their argument for the apostles' approbation of it, seems so little convincing, that we are constrained to believe they will stand by their perceptions rather than their proofs, and hold with us, that since slavery as a system is evil, as a system, the apostles can never have tolerated it.

Our investigations in the New Testament, have led us to the following results :

1. That the holding a man in involuntary servitude, for the benefit of the master rather than of the slave, is repugnant to the plainest principles of the Gospel, and to the specific directions of the apostles concerning slavery ; and has nothing to shield it from the charge of abominable wickedness.

2. That the wickedness of such slaveholding is not to be imputed to the master, who, finding himself, without his own act, in a relation of guardianship to a dependent man, regulates the relation by the simple laws of Gospel love and justice.—We grant very cheerfully then, that point which some defenders of slavery think it necessary for them to maintain, namely, that a man may have absolute power and not be criminal. For external circumstances, which he cannot control, may have placed it in his hands. No man was ever in a relation of more absolute power, than that which the Good Samaritan, in the parable, sustained to the wounded and helpless traveller ; or than a mother sustains to her helpless infant. A man is no more to be blamed for being pronounced by a law which he does not approve, to be the absolute proprietor of a slave, than he is for being made by his Creator with stronger muscles than another. But this admission does not touch the simple question ; is it right for any human agency to sustain, or tolerate a law, which is just designed to give one man despotic power over another man ?

To make that a mere question of expediency, as some do, upon the ground that the patriarchs and some kings have had, and have needed absolute power for the very welfare of their subjects, is no fairer than to maintain, that since some men have been physically strong, and have needed to be so for the help of those who were weak or wounded, therefore, it is a question of expediency whether, in any particular case, one man's strength is to be increased at the expense of another's. It is a question solely for that providence, which makes one man weak, and fits another to be his helper; and of divine law, that commits to the powerful just so much authority as the necessities of the helpless may need. As to that category of things indifferent, in which the absolute control of the master is sought to be put; when was it so extended as to include questions that concern the dearest interests and rights of one's fellow-men? The small dust of the balance perhaps may not turn the beam, but the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and faith, are to be estimated to the nicest hair. If any question in morals may be left to the toss of a penny,—a position which a careful analysis will utterly condemn,—that of one man's absolute or despotic authority over another man, is the very last to be trusted to such a decision. The case, with the example of the apostles to guide us, is so plain, that it cannot be confused. They found one man in power, and another in dependence. To them and to Christian masters the relation was a simple act of providence. It was no model after which men are to make other facts. To say that such a fact of providence is no sin to the passive subject of it, is a truism almost too bald to be stated. Under that fact duty arises. It is not suddenly to abjure every trace of that power without which, those who have already suffered under it, can by no means be relieved; but it is to reduce it immediately to that measure and form of lawful authority that is fixed by the universal principles of kindness and justice. We hold then that the authority of a master, under certain circumstances and within certain limits, may be as lawful as that of a parent. Let us attempt to define those limits and circumstances.

Lawful authority, however the occasions and the forms of it may vary, has but one essence. It is power over those who are *actually dependent*, and it is *limited to the demands of that dependence*. We deny that such a thing is known or possible under the government of God, as authority commissioned to limit the advantage of its subjects. On the other hand, we maintain that the design of all lawful authority is to encourage and protect the extension of such advantage to its widest limits. It is so with the government of God himself; the aim of which is to promote the welfare of his creatures, not to a certain arbitrary point, but to the extent of their capacity. The same is true of civil government; the same of the government of the husband, or the father. For however men may differ in their views of the tendency of particular forms of civil, marital, or parental authority; all agree that the true idea of such authority, is defined by the greatest real advantage of those over whom it is exercised. Such real advantage in no case consists in absolute license. For there are two classes of evils to which the subjects of lawful authority are exposed, and against which such authority is appointed to guard. The first consists of all those evils that are entirely external to the subject, and the remedy for which is protection. The other consists of such evils as grow naturally out of the vices, or inexperience, or depravity of the subject himself, and the remedy for these is control and discipline. The element of restraint is therefore indispensable to lawful authority; and it is the measure and design of that restraint that pronounce authority unlawful. For it is evident that the subjects of authority are exposed to a third class of dangers, which may spring out of the authority itself. If those who wield the power are men of like passions with those who are the subjects of it, why should all the restraints be gathered about the latter, and the former be free to act without control? All human power needs to be carefully defined and checked, or it runs into despotism. Now the authority that is not sufficient to guard its subjects against the two classes of evils first mentioned is too weak. But the authority that is not itself guarded against the third danger is too great. God only is

absolute. His sovereignty is our safety. "For the Lord is gracious and full of compassion ;" "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." All other authority has its limited and appointed uses, and its excellence lies in its proportion to its end. When the dangers that are external to the governing power, are greater than that which lies within it, that power may appropriately incline in that degree towards absolutism ; not because the ruler chooses or has any divine right to be absolute, but because the very definition of lawful authority requires him, under the given circumstances, to be so. Thus patriarchal authority, in its day, was right ; and, under some circumstances, an absolute monarchy still is right. But the very same rule that establishes it in one case forbids it in another ; and that rule is the true interest and safety of those who are governed.

In regard to civil government, the question how far it should be intrusted with absolute power, is sure to decide itself. For the prerogative of the sovereign will always compare exactly with the helplessness of the subjects ; and the two will be in inverse proportion to the intelligence of the latter, and their general capacity for self-government. No man can long continue a despot, except over those who need a despot to rule them. In regard to the government of the family, the case is different. The children and wife of a tyrannical father have no such means at their command for checking his despotism, as the subjects of a civil ruler may bring to bear on him. A race degraded into slavery is more helpless still ; no influences of natural affection soften the despotism under which they suffer. The intelligence, the concert, the civil power, all are with the masters ; and there is no door for their release, but such as the masters themselves may choose to open. Hence resulted the apparent anomalies of those ancient republics, in which the citizens were free, for they had intelligence enough to control their rulers ; while wives and children, and the multitudes of their slaves were held in the most abject bondage. The general despotism that belonged to the earliest conditions of society, had been half cured. Above the citizen was justice ; below him was

oppression. The pure selfishness of the dominant class was the parent of both results. At this point the Gospel comes in to complete the work, which mere civilization begins but cannot finish ; and, by its principles of love and justice, it attacks that despotism of the father and the master which the helplessness of its subjects is incompetent to reach, and establishes for every form of authority that universal law, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." Where natural affection has co-operated with the Gospel, their triumph may be considered to have become complete. There is no Christian nation that tolerates any other government of the family, than that which aims to secure the greatest advantage of all its members. The last remnant of the universal despotism is slavery ; and the Christian republic of America prolongs the anomalous injustice of pagan Rome and Athens.

But the defenders of slavery claim that the essence of a master's authority is analogous to that of a ruler, or father, or husband. We accept the analogy, and will hold them to it. The authority of the latter, by the consent of Christendom, is limited, that the advantage of the subjects may be unrestricted. The authority of the master for which we contend is limited too, by the very same Gospel, and to the very same measure and end, namely, that the advantage of the subject may be unrestricted. The slaveholding that leaves a slave to make the greatest ultimate advancement in property, and intelligence, and social and political position for which his own true energy and merit adapt him, embodies a measure of authority that is wholly lawful. But for one to plead for a kind of authority, that defines and restricts the advantage of its subjects, and extends itself to sustain the restriction ; and then to summon the lawful authority of the state, or of the family to keep such a gratuitous despotism in countenance, is, in fact, to abandon his cause. It is a mere quibble upon the word authority. The same sort of reasoning would establish an analogy between the power of a parent and that of a pirate, or between the powers of light and the powers of darkness.

We admit and insist, then, that there may be a lawful authority of a master over an involuntary servant or slave ; but that that authority cannot exceed the limits at which all other lawful authority is fixed. But we insist, besides, that the lawfulness of such authority is not perpetual and universal, but local and occasional : created, not by a constant necessity of the race, and a constant divine warrant adapted to that necessity, but by the general laws of the Gospel, in their application to particular circumstances. To this, the friends of slavery will not consent : but they insist that it must take its stand upon the very level with those other and permanent relations, which we have been noticing. And their strong argument is this : That the Scriptures give rules for the deportment of masters and slaves, in the very lists which contain similar rules for magistrates and subjects ; for husbands and wives ; and for parents and children ; and, that the command of obedience to masters is, in its form, the very echo of that command of the Decalogue which requires children to honor their parents. Granting, now, the most that can be asked, and what is by no means true—namely, that the apostles intended these lists as a formal and equal warrant for all the relations included within them ; even then, they did not warrant every relation that could be designated by the terms they used, but only the lawful relations which answered to those terms. For example, when they use the word “ wife,” they are not to be quoted as proving that every relation of wives to husbands is lawful : for, in that case, they would approve polygamy ; and when they speak of “ kings,” they surely do not enjoin submission to every usurper. Now the fundamental question, In what form is each of these relations lawful ? is in no way answered in the rules themselves, but that answer is in each instance presupposed ; and if it were not for sufficient information concerning the lawful relation of parent and child, of husband and wife, of ruler and subject, derived from other sources, these mere rules would be utterly nugatory. They define the duties, but the relations that involve them they

do not define at all. Whence shall the several definitions come? We answer without difficulty:

1st. The relation of parent and child is defined by nature, outside of the Scriptures, in terms so plain that any formal definition within them would have been idle. Without that definition of nature, a hundred such commands as that of the Decalogue or of the apostles, to "honor" parents or "obey" them, would never have established the relation. The same law of nature that establishes that relation at all, makes it universal; and in this way only can the commands referred to extend themselves to the race. They go where the relation goes, and the relation goes everywhere.

2d. The law of marriage is not defined by nature; for nature does not fix the persons and number of men's wives, as it does those of their children. If it does, the history of our race proves that it leaves room for sad mistakes; and, therefore, we have the formal announcement of the law of marriage extending even to the prohibition of unjust divorces. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh." Mark, x. 7, 8. "Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another committeth adultery against her;" verse 11. The relation being thus defined, it may extend as far as it can; and the law of nature extends it everywhere.

3d. In the case of civil government, no definition of the form of the relation is given, either by nature or by Scripture. It is left to be decided by universal principles of justice in their adaptation to particular circumstances. But the universality of the relation is determined, both by the necessities of the race, and by the most formal Divine warrant: "The powers that be are ordained of God: whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." The magistrate is the "minister of God:" "a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Rom. xiii.

Each of these three relations is appointed for the race; and in one way or another, either by nature, or by particular scriptural law, or by the general laws of the Gospel, it is made impossible for men to doubt, either in what the several

relations consist, or how far they may be extended. The mere form of each of these relations, and men's right to establish them, would have been as well understood in the world to-day, if not one of the apostles' rules, above referred to, had been given.

Now we come to the lawful relation of master and slave. And we demand, first, the organic law that establishes the relation ; and then the formal divine warrant for making it universal. Both are utterly wanting. Not a word, not a syllable, in the whole Gospel, not an expression outside of that limited and peculiar law of Israel, helps us to guess how slavery is to begin. If it is claimed to be defined by nature, as is the relation of parent and child, it is hard to see how a man can use the language without discovering the fallacy. For, we ask, does any law of mere nature make a man the master of slaves ? Does it belong to society, in its necessary condition, not that one man should be poorer or more ignorant than another, or that one class of men should be dependent for their social advantages upon other classes of men ; but that one particular man should need the control and protection of another particular man, just as a child needs the protection and control of a parent ? That one man may come to stand in such a relation to another, we cheerfully admit. We are only doubting whether mere nature places him in it. If a colony, in which there are neither children nor slaves, should be planted in any remote territory, will the lapse of twenty years bring slaves into the new community as surely as children, and both by God's appointed law of nature ? * Slaveholding may be necessary and justifiable, but nature has not established it. It comes by another process.

All lawful authority grows out of dependence. There is a certain dependence of every man upon the control and protection of his fellow-men. Civil government meets the de-

* The blunt Romans acknowledged that slavery was contrary to nature (*contra naturam*). Justinian's *Instit.*, I. 1., Tit. 4. The more subtle Greeks disputed the point. It has been left for Christian philosophers to establish its lawfulness both by nature and their sacred books.

mands of this. That one man should be poorer, or more ignorant, or more depraved than another, does not demand for him the intervention of another authority than that of the State, until the care of general laws cannot be specific enough to meet his demands. It cannot in the case with children, and therefore the civil law wisely recognizes the appointment of God, by which the father is the guardian of the child. The same is the case with the insane; the restraint of whom is lawful. So far as punishment is remedial, and not exemplary, this is the case with criminals. The same is the case with vagrants. In each such instance the law appoints a kind of authority to care for those who cannot, or will not, care for themselves. Now, it is plain that cases may arise in which, from some imbecility, one man may seek to throw himself upon the particular care of another man. If the latter accepts the trust, he is surely entitled to exercise so much authority over his ward as is consistent with that indispensable idea of all authority—namely, the unrestricted advantage of its subject. He is entitled to as much service as shall fairly compensate him for the support and protection which he extends to the helpless man; for that is a simple matter of justice, with which the true advantage of the latter cannot be inconsistent. If the dependent is addicted to vices, the superior is entitled to restrain them by the rules and methods which common justice and the circumstances may define. All this may be a matter of consent between the two; or if the subject of such equitable authority should resist it, the civil government, upon proof of the actual incompetence of the inferior to care for himself, may rightfully appoint the other his guardian or “committee.” The power conferred in that case, in order to be just, would need to be limited to the true and unrestricted advantage of the subject of it; for the government itself could possess no right inconsistent with such advantage, and it could not depute an authority which it did not possess.

It is easy to see that cases like that just supposed, might be multiplied, though not without pre-supposing some grievous wrong, of which the degraded class had been the subjects.

But the wrong having been done, and the dependence of these upon their superiors being actual, and incapable of immediate remedy, the government, under which such cases existed, might make them the occasion of a general law, appointing or recognizing each man's actual guardian as his lawful master. But in that case still, the authority deputed by civil law, could never exceed the authority which such law itself possessed. Or if the master's authority could be thought to come from some other source than the civil law, it could not, without some formal warrant from God, transcend those fixed limits of all authority—the unrestricted advantage of its subjects. Such a warrant is not to be produced. It would be a stain upon our religion if it were. And thus slavery stands, not by any definition or charter of a master's rights, contained in the Word of God, or in the mere law of nature ; but by particular exigencies of society, and by that common law of the Gospel which defines duty in regard to them. It stands by no exception to the Saviour's rule of equal love and justice, but it is based upon that rule itself. Such is the essence of lawful slavery. Neither Scripture nor nature admits a different definition.

And now, in regard to the universality of the relation : men attempt to put it upon a footing with those others which the apostles made the subject of their rules, and to establish the relation of master and slave by as lasting a warrant, and as general, as that which sustains the rest. We demand that the warrant be produced. We have it for the relation of parent and child ; we have it for marriage ; we have it for civil government. Nature makes the first two universal ; and common necessities of our race, that are just one remove from nature, together with the formal law of God, do the same for the third. But what is the appointed field for the relation of master and slave ? The rules of the apostles do not define it, for they never tell where slavery is lawful, and where it is not. It surely is not lawful everywhere. Are we to understand that all those Christian communities in which slavery is unknown, have departed just as far from the appointment of nature and of God, as if they had abolished marriage or civil government ? If any one is wild enough to

take such ground as this, he must decide by some clear rule, which portion of the offending community has sinned in declining the mastership, and ought to resume it ; and which portion should be converted into slaves. It must be plain to the most earnest defender of the system, that it was not intended to be quite universal. Then what is to draw the line ? Who shall be masters, and who shall not ? Is it a mere matter of choice with the master ? No other relation is formed in that way. No man in a civilized land is a ruler because he chooses to be, or a husband because he chooses to be ; and even the helpless child has his guardian appointed by the act of God. How should one of two men become the master of the other just by his choice ? There can be but one rule by which, with God's approbation, one man becomes a master, and another a slave ; and that is the *actual* dependence of certain individual men upon other individual men, for a kind of care and protection which civil government is not adapted to afford. The relation presupposes, upon the part of the former, conditions and risks essentially the same with those that belong to children. And those conditions and risks actually existing, it is proper that they be met by an adequate guardianship. But how shall one enforce the remedy where there is no disease ? If one man is weaker than another, and the laws of the State either protect him in his weakness, or may be made to do so, upon what ground shall another, who is stronger, offer himself as his protector, and rob him of his liberty to save him from dangers which do not exist ? If such an interference may be made at all, to what extent may it be carried ? Whenever one is persuaded that his neighbor would be a better Christian, and father, and more useful to society, if he should assume the care of his concerns, is he at liberty to make the experiment ? And if civil law may forbid the effort, is positive civil law the only obstacle ? Can it be right that one man's whim, seconded by his power, should make another his mere subject ? But perhaps other nations, less favored than that which contains the masters, may appropriately furnish them with slaves. But what principle of the law of nations or of God entitles a man to do, beyond the

power of his own government, that which it would be wrong to do within it? Has his own government debarred him of some natural right, in forbidding him to make slaves within its limits, or have the citizens of his nation some natural rights which do not belong to those who are born beyond it? Perhaps their rights are equal, but their advantages are less; and thus it becomes the duty of the more refined, to make themselves the guardians of the more degraded. But what charged these particular men with the care of those? What cry of dependence, wafted across oceans, moved to Christian pity the parental heart of the would-be master? What heaven-appointed agent was it that hung that burden upon his arm, and charged him like a father, or husband, or ruler, to seek the greatest advantage of his new found charge? Was it a mere wish for a servant, attaining its result by all the terrible machinery of the slave trade? Then that amounts to proof that God never intended that slavery should grow in that direction. He builds up the family in peace and blessing; he establishes the state in justice; and he never made it a process of his Gospel, that crime should be committed to nourish slavery. To make one man a dependent of another, when he is no dependent in fact, is, under the Gospel,* as it was even under the Mosaic law,† a crime of the first magnitude—a pure wrong, which no remote prospect of good can warrant—an act of mere tyranny, which, having no foundation in fact, can have no limit but the advantage or caprice of those who establish it. The very design and office of civil government, of the law of nations, and of the law of God, is not to originate or maintain any such assumptions, but to overshadow and crush them.

Men may reason as they will, then, concerning social relations, and attempt to include slaveholding among them. It may have its place there, and God may sanction it, but with this distinction; that there is not a spot upon the face of the earth to which the rest are forbidden to go at any moment. There is no ordinary community from which they can be inno-

* 1 Tim. 1. 10.

† Ex. 21. 16

cently excluded. But slaveholding, as God approves it, must watch its time. It comes in the train of terrible wrongs, like those messengers of mercy who traverse a battle-field after the fight is over, lift up the fainting head, stanch and bind up the gaping wounds, give hope and help and tender care, and get for their reward, 'the blessing of him that was ready to perish.' Here is the slaveholding that has the Gospel warrant. May it plant itself wherever it can find foothold. May it last till it has done its work.

In regard to American slavery, then, we hold that the following positions are established equally by reason and the Gospel :—

1. That the principle and method of its establishment are equally abhorrent to the plainest principles of justice and humanity.

2. That every present law that confers authority upon the master, for any purpose, or to any degree inconsistent with the unrestricted advantage of the slave, maintains and aggravates the original wrong, and is utterly condemned by every rule of right.

The fact that incidental advantages may have accrued to the oppressed race from their captivity, in no way touches the propriety of their enslavement. If such advantages are to warrant the influences that may bring men into possession of them, it is not possible to think of any outrages beyond those of the slave-trade, (if those are not the greatest possible,) that could not be warranted upon the same ground. For Christians hold that the knowledge and possession of true religion are the greatest of possible blessings: and one can easily think of violence committed by one citizen upon the person of another, in defiance of all law, and ending in secret imprisonment and torture, that might yet bring the subject of it into contact with books or with some fellow-sufferer, whose influence in connection with the terrible discipline the sufferer might endure, might lead to his conversion. Fancy his torturer, when aware of the result, felicitating himself upon his agency in producing it. One would think that the Word of

God was full enough of instances of blessed results following the most wicked agencies, to make any man, with sense or conscience, shrink from making any possible good results of American slavery, stand as the defenders of the system. It has hardly done more for the slaves and for their countrymen than did the brethren of Joseph and the wife of Potiphar for him and for Egypt; or than did the wicked Haman for Mordecai and his brethren; or than did the chief-priests and the Pharisees for the world for which Christ died. If all the good that God accomplishes by means of men's sins, is to count in behalf of those who have committed the sins, some men, whom the world esteems as wretches, must outshine the very angels of light. Are we never to hear the last of this shallow plea? When men are confronted with the plainest condemnation of the law of God, are they to shelter themselves behind his providence, and tell us, complacently, that God hath made the wrath of man to praise him?

3. Where that system of bondage already exists, it is the duty of every man, who is at all implicated in it, to use his best efforts to place it at once upon the footing of the Gospel and of natural right—namely, of authority exercised for the unrestricted advantage of its subjects. It is not his duty either to disband his own unprovided slaves, or to clamor senselessly for abolition. The Christian slaveholders of our land find themselves in the midst of circumstances, not unlike those with which their early brethren had to deal. They are under a law which extends a necessary authority to most unjust proportions; and the dictate of wisdom and the Gospel is not to repeal the law, but to repeal so much of it as is unjust. The embankments which even arbitrary enactments have raised around a sea of evils, are not to be suddenly broken down. Nay, the greater the past wrongs of slavery, the stronger the demand that slavery be not ended in the greatest wrong of all—namely, the withdrawal, from ignorant and vicious men, of the only control that can save them from incalculable crime and suffering. A man may abate none of his philanthropy, and yet entertain serious doubts whether all the past action of Christian states and nations, for the emancipation

of slaves, has been most wisely and successfully conducted. The whole question of the abolishment of slavery is to be decided, not by the sudden impulses of even the best humanity; surely not by the strained notions of any who can see but one evil under the sun, and are willing to sacrifice all interests to its destruction. That is not good surgery that kills a patient for the sake of conquering his disease. The hand that is eager to pull the tares, must be sure that the wheat will not be plucked up with them. The wisdom of the wisest may well be summoned to the elucidation of so complex a problem; and time may be made to do kindly, what haste cannot do at all.

Meanwhile, religion, and truth, and common humanity, have one demand to make; that the curse be not baptized as a blessing; that the disease be not fostered at the expense of the health that remains, and that the wheat be not trampled down for the sake of watering the tares. Let us know things by their true names. Slaveholding, except as a merciful care of the helpless, is, under Gospel law, a sin. Any agency of one man, or of a nation, that fastens the yoke when it might grow lighter—that adds to the bondage a single element that is not necessary, by the common laws of Christian morality—is a sin, and there is nothing to excuse it. No word of the Bible stands forth to plead for the outrage. Which one of those passages that we have quoted, is it that contains the germ of those laws of our Southern States which tolerate the separation of households—a thing which a half heathen emperor forbade fifteen hundred years ago; or of those which forbid the education of slaves; or of those which leave the slave without security against even the murderous rage of the master, if only the eye of no white man shall witness the encounter; or which leave the virtue of every slave woman no protection but the master's conscience? It is but little more than a month since the writer of these pages heard, in the saloon of one of our most frequented steamers, a gray-headed man, whose dress and language indicated education and wealth—and who was called by name by some of those about him—assert, with a grossness of expression

which it pollutes the page to hint at, his own paternity of many of the slaves of his plantation, and his absolute power over the victims of his lust. He is not quoted as a fair example of a Southern slaveholder. For the credit of humanity we are prompt to hope that such a man is the object of loathing in the community in which he lives. But the law that admits of even one such instance, admits of ten thousand. The flippant boast of power which this wretch made, could be repeated by just so many others as should choose to be like him. Who knows how many of the victims of such enormities may be actual Christians? We demand New Testament warrant for the system. The author of the argument we are reviewing, though he has used general terms, must have restricted them in his own mind to a meaning which no system of slaveholding, at least in Gospel times, has ever exemplified. Surely, with a view of the essential features of American slavery in his mind, he could never have penned and sought to prove that unguarded proposition, "Slaveholding not sinful." The word has two meanings. Slaveholding, as the law establishes it, and with no other restraints than the laws throw around it, may well be such a sin that nearly every threatening of God's Word shall discharge itself upon it; and slaveholding, beneath some Christian roof, and regulated by the principles of love and justice, may be the very ministration of mercy. We are not to be told that such variations may enter into every relation. It is not true. There is no relation that God has made lawful, that does not admit of such a definition that the restraints of civil law can be gathered close around it, and every serious excess can have its appointed punishments. Slaveholding, as a remedial system, might be similarly defined and guarded. But how shall you arrange checks within a system that begins by making one human being the chattel of another? What shall be the abuses of that which itself abuses all natural right? How will you restrain its excesses without attacking its substance? In point of fact, we demand, what other relation is there within the law of civilized nations that admits, without a legal penalty, such crimes as in the law of slavery go uncondemned?

It cannot be a hair-splitting nicety that makes a distinction between this slavery of law and that other slaveholding of mercy ; the one holds the disease in the embrace of walls and dungeons, where the light and breath of heaven are forbidden to reach it ; and the other throws wide open the infected dwelling, and every Gospel influence of justice and love breathes through it "with healing on its wings." Under these circumstances, the true interests of the slave call for discriminating action. An unqualified condemnation of slaveholding would be as unjust and as mischievous as an unqualified approval of it. You may burn the wheat with the chaff, or you may garner the chaff with the wheat. If you will do neither of these, you must separate the two. It is not the slaveholding of the Gospel that curses the half of our nation, and disturbs the rest, but a system of gratuitous wrong and oppression, and there is only one resolution of the difficulty, and that is, Do right. If it is hard to know what right is, those who revere the Gospel will suffer it to decide.

Let Christian masters reduce their own slaveholding to the strict model furnished by the apostles, and make it a slaveholding that is just and equal,—that expressly disclaims right upon the part of one man that may swallow up any right upon the part of another,—that sets its subjects above that condition of mere bondage, which men call slavery, into a relation consistent with brotherly love of their persons and their characters. While such a relation lasts, it is hard to think of duties more solemn or more weighty than it imposes. May God guide and help the Christian master who finds himself the guardian, and instructor, and chief exemplar, of scores or hundreds of ignorant, and vicious, and superstitious men, for his care of whom he must give account. May God pardon the thoughtless men, who, making a sacred trust the ground of their authority, either neglect that trust themselves, or barter it for money into hands that may despise it utterly. How shall one who pleads that God has made him his brother's keeper, leave the voice of his brother's blood to cry unto God from the ground?—The question, How soon a Christian master should terminate such a relation entirely, must, in

the absence of any civil regulations, be left to the enlightened conscience and the law of love.

Every Christian citizen living under slave laws has an important duty to perform. If he were living under a despotism, his duties would all be private. But a slaveholder in our day, unlike those to whom the apostles wrote, stands in the midst between the law and the slave, and in his double character of citizen and master, controls them both. It is not enough for a good citizen to say in his heart that he did not make a wicked law, and that he wishes it was changed. Let him say it aloud, and give his reasons. If by any part of his conduct he can be thought to be approving the iniquitous statute, the duty is more imperative still. He not only tolerates the wrong, but he abets it; for the sin grows bolder by his example. No prudence can excuse his silence. The struggle is one of right against wrong, and it will never be an easy one. Let those who love the right begin it at once, and, with prayer to God, "labor and wait." Every good citizen, who has the existing laws of slavery in any degree within his control, is entitled to demand that they reduce immediately the authority of the master to that standard of all lawful authority, namely, the unrestricted advantage of its subjects. Let civil law be made the helper of good masters, and not a license for bad ones; and the evils of slavery would be mitigated at once, and the end of it could not be very distant.

All legislators who have to deal with slavery have a responsibility from which they cannot shield themselves. They are the ministers of God. The foundation of all true statesmanship is in absolute justice, and a Christian statesman must hold that the Gospel is the ultimate rule. It can never be dangerous to follow that rule, for the Gospel and true policy are not foes, but friends. What is right is always best. Thus, if the master's prerogative were limited immediately to such a claim of service as the laws of the Gospel would fully admit under the circumstances, there could be no loss of service, no loss of necessary authority and control; but only a loss of factitious right to control one man against his true benefit, and for the benefit of another. If the test of capacity,

which has been applied to the African race in this country, could be thought to have proved conclusively and finally that a state of slavery is the only one consistent with their true advantage, the law, as their merciful guardian, might take care that their slavery should be perpetual. It would only need to define the terms and conditions of their bondage within those limits which such true advantage should actually demand. With what propriety the advocates of the hopeless inferiority of the African race would fix those limits where they now are, it is hard to see. Since their degradation is hopeless, at least relieve it as far as possible.

But that whole pretence is too shallow to be made without blushing. A man would not undertake to decide the qualities of a breed of sheep that had been developed under influences as unfavorable as those under which the African race has been held in this country. The last defender of that doctrine of incapacity, with whom the present writer has conversed, was an intelligent Southern gentleman, the antipode of him already quoted. Before he ended the conversation, which had wandered away from the first topic, he told of a slave of his father's, "well educated," as he described him, who acted the part of a physician among his fellow-slaves, and not unfrequently in the family of his master. "He has bled me," said the narrator, extending his right arm, "many a time;" and he proceeded to tell how this slave, upon some groundless fear of being sold South, had escaped to Boston; from which city he had written a manly and well expressed letter to explain the course he had taken. The high esteem in which he had been held, and the generosity of those to whom he wrote saved him from molestation, and he was yet in freedom. It was not till the author of this statement had defined the subject of it to be a full-blooded African, that he remembered the position he had been defending a while before.—The legislation that begins in the foregone conclusion, that the race of slaves in our country cannot be fitted for freedom, begins in an arrogant assumption, and all the precautions that are taken to keep them in bondage confess it. Did ever a bolder absurdity insult com-

mon sense, than that which insists, in one breath, that Africans need to be slaves because they cannot be improved, and that they need to be debarred from education to keep them slaves? How soon the day of their liberation may come, time and wisdom and just laws only can decide. The remedy is in men's hands, the cure is in God's.

A just legislation upon slavery within the limits in which it is already established, would remove at once all possible ground of the discord which now disturbs our nation. It is not the question of a man's right to hold slaves in any or every part of our land that has originated and sustained this most mischievous turmoil. Our fellow-countrymen of the South are justified in demanding their rights in this particular, and the North and the country would be most guilty in refusing them. The only room for mistake is in the interpretation of those rights. If the parties who are interested can agree upon them, the case is plain ; if they cannot, the appeal must be made to law ; for under a constitutional government every question of right is to be resolved by law in some form, and not by the mere power or caprice of one of the parties. The laws that touch the matter of slavery are these : 1st. There is the law of God in the Gospel, which all Christians recognize ; and this admits one man's claim to another man's service ; but it admits no more. 2d. Next there is the law of nations by which slavery is "contrary to the nature of man," and implies a constant "state of war" between the two parties of such a relation.* 3d. Next there

* "Is it lawful to condemn prisoners of war to slavery? Yes, in cases which give a right to kill,—when they have rendered themselves *personally guilty of some crime deserving death*. The ancients used to sell their prisoners of war for slaves. They, indeed, thought they had a right to put them to death. In every circumstance, where I cannot innocently take away my prisoner's life, I have no right to make him a slave. If I spare his life, and condemn him to a state so contrary to the nature of man, I still continue with him the state of war ; he lies under no obligation to me, for what is life without freedom? If any one counts life a favor where the grant of it is attended with chains, be it so ; let him accept the kindness, submit to the destiny which awaits him, and fulfil the duties annexed to it. But he must apply to some other writer to teach him those duties ; there have been authors enough who have amply treated of them. I shall dwell no longer on the subject, and indeed that dis-

are the terms of our national confederation, which scrupulously excludes the recognition of any thing more than that claim to service which the law of God admits. 4th. And lastly there is the law of a particular commonwealth, that is sovereign within its own territory and no farther. It is the attempt to press the definitions of such local law upon the terms of general laws which carefully exclude them, that has given rise to the threatening strife through which our nation is now passing. The attempt is made by one of two disputing parties to sanctify a form of despotic power, by the sacred name of property, unknown in such an application beyond the commonwealths that thus employ it ; and it is the resistance of this unfounded claim that raises the cry of injustice, and even the threat of carnage. As though because marriage has the consent of all the nation, the law of a particular state that should define a wife to be a chattel and authorize a corresponding treatment of her, should be the basis of a right to carry a wife as property beyond the territory which such a law could cover. Let just claims be made, and let them be honored to their full extent. Let the holders of slaves diminish their prerogative to such a claim of service as civil law has a right to admit, and then let master and slave pass through the world as freely as parent and child.—This is not a question of politics but of principle. There are those, no doubt, who pervert it to personal political uses. But no question of pure morals can become the subject of dispute among political parties, without being immediately subjected to such perversion. Its own intrinsic importance does not leave it upon that account. There only is the greater need that conscientious men should rescue it from its abuse, and place it upon its true ground, and in its true proportions before the nation. There is a serious misapprehension prevailing, both among statesmen and others, as to the character of those who are interested in this struggle, and the ground of their interest. There is upon the one hand, a class of men who place the abolition of slavery above the

Gospel and above all national interests, and who threaten to dissolve the Union if slavery shall be suffered to spread ; another class occupy the other extreme, and threaten to dissolve the Union if slavery shall be forbidden to spread. May the day be far distant in which our destinies shall be intrusted to either of these. Between these, and utterly without sympathy in their extravagance, stands the great mass of our countrymen, divided in sentiment, indeed, but determined to use the best means for the true and lasting benefit of our nation. Of this mass of moderate men, many consider that the question of the extension of slavery is most safely excluded from the national counsels, and left to decide itself. And there is another class as moderate as these and as true lovers of their whole country, who believe that for one man to hold another in involuntary bondage at the cost of any one interest of the latter, is clearly a sin against God, condemned equally by the Gospel and by the common principles of human justice. They hold that where the general legislation of our land extends, it has no more right to license such a sin, than to establish it. They hold that every voter of our land is himself a representative, and is charged with the interests of every human being whom his vote may affect, and especially of those who for any disability cannot vote in their own behalf. They hold that if the relation of master and slave, as it is sought to be extended, were known by our constitution beyond the limits of the laws which define it, the interests of the master might have a legal claim to superior consideration, though every moral claim to that consideration should be wanting ; but the restriction put upon the extension of slavery by the very framers of that instrument, in connection with its own terms, carefully guarded, is claimed to have put its meaning so far beyond doubt, that no analogy now attempted between the rights of old States and of new ones can obscure it. Thus they hold that while, under the laws of particular States, the master may have legal rights above those of the slave ; apart from these laws, the constitution of the United States, and the law of God, place the two men upon

a level ; and that for a citizen or a legislator to involve the general republic, the remotest recognition of that local claim of "property" in man, is a renewal of the original wrong of slavery, purely gratuitous and therefore criminal before God. These views may be just or unjust. But in a large proportion of those bosoms which entertain them, they are as far from political strife or self-aggrandizement as is the motive which prompts the feeding of the hungry. To include the class who indulge them in one sweeping designation of political agitators, is at least, a mistake, that can serve none of the uses of truth or patriotism. This conscientious opposition to the establishment, or the permission of slavery upon the national territory, is one of the forces at work throughout our land to-day ; and the statesman who ignores it, or attempts to override it, is like a sailor who makes no account of the gulf-stream or the trade-winds.

The Christian Church has a most important duty to discharge concerning slavery. The principle that it is safe for her to deal with it as the apostles dealt with it, is strictly just. What can she do but approve without question what they did not condemn ? But how much more is she bound to approve ? Where they discriminated, is she commanded to be blind ? If the term slavery, in its current use throughout our country, limited itself to the spirit of the apostles' rules for masters, definitions and distinctions would be no more called for upon that subject than upon that of marriage. A slaveholder would no more invite suspicion than a husband. But it is notorious that the term, in its received sense, describes a relation utterly at variance with the apostles' words. Under such circumstances, the bare word slavery embodies no law for the Church of Christ, and the apostles are dishonored, not by those who refuse to adopt so perverted a rule, but by those who consent to it. The husband of a score of wives has no right in a Christian Church, because marriage is lawful. Nor has one who is a slaveholder, according to the definition of Roman law or American, a right in a Christian Church, because there is a Christian way of holding slaves. In any community where the unlawful relation predominates,

the Church, to be faithful, must discriminate between the two. No abstract definition will be needed to effect its purpose. The question, What is lawful slaveholding? does not stalk about the country, seeking a challenger, but it chooses its time, and its place, and its men, and throws down the gauntlet. Every Church that has to do with slavery at all, must meet that question. It may do so by taking the convenient nondescript term of "slavery," and making it a mantle of charity to cover that for which the Word of God has no charity; and then it decides the case for slavery as men best understand the term,—surely for slavery as its members may choose to maintain it. It quibbles out of a question, which the apostles met like men, and leaves the Gospel and "the poor that hath no helper" to be the sufferers; and makes infidelity and the cause of oppression to be the gainers. On the other hand, it may prudently avoid all action upon a subject so difficult, and decline the fellowship of those whose character of slaveholders would compel it to declare itself. But the prudence will not avail it; it has only saved itself from condemning what is wrong, by seeming to all men to condemn what is right. It is a question that demands distinctions. There is no deciding it in the mass. "Aye" or "Nay" is equally unjust; and the question once propounded, to avoid it is impossible. The Church to which it has been addressed may act formally or informally; it may decline it by vote, or decline it by refusing to vote, yet it cannot be silent; for its silence is speech. But why should any part of the Christian Church, that meets the question of American slavery, seek to be silent concerning its unquestionable enormities? Let Christian masters, who live by the rules of the Gospel, receive a cordial welcome into any Church of Christ. Or, if mere convenience, or a lawful expediency, proposes a different alliance, let the hearty right hand of Christian fellowship meet their advances, and dismiss them again as brethren in the Lord. But why should a wicked system of slavery be suffered to hang upon their skirts? If prudence is the spell that charms the Church to silence, that is mistaken prudence that leaves the morals of the Gospel in obscurity;

that, in the form of tolerating some real authority, tolerates as well the grossest oppression. If those same apostles, whom we hear vindicated with just and eloquent indignation from the charge of swerving before mighty sins, could come back again to find themselves quoted as authority for "slavery," and to hear "slavery" defined by Southern laws, and to see Christian citizens, tacitly at least, upholding those laws, what cry of "religion and politics" would paralyze their earnest speech? But their return is not needed. The Gospel is complete, and it only needs that the Church, in the duties of her ordinary discipline and instruction, should set it forth. With legislators, or politics, or this man's fear, or that man's anger, she, at least, has nothing to do—but with the morals of her members and the principles of her own action, as the Gospel defines them. Where the Gospel gives no rule, let her hold her peace; but where the case is clear, let her speak. There is no power that can stand before the truth. The Gospel is in our land, not upon sufferance, but upon God's work and under God's care. Let the nation hear every word of it; and, if it gives power, let it stand; where it restrains, let it stop.

In many most honorable instances the Church has spoken clearly, not only at a distance from the evils she has condemned, but in the very midst of them. If the madness of Northern fanaticism has tended to silence other voices that would have spoken ere this, both the silence and the cause of it are to be deeply regretted. But it cannot be necessary for good men in any capacity to compensate for the folly of some who have condemned where they should have approved, by approving what should be condemned. The truth is always safe. But it never stands firmer for being toppled over like a leaning tower. If there is a centre point of reason and justice, let Christians rest there, and not swing to one extreme, because some other pendulum has swung to the other.

To this consent shall good men come, both in Church and State. The result may be delayed, but it cannot be prevented. There shall be good will on earth, and peace toward men.

The Gospel of Christ has put an end to one system of slavery ;
it is struggling with another ; but it must conquer.

“ For right is right, since God is God,
And right the day shall win ;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin.”

To have contributed to such a result would be a blessing
from God. To have labored for it is scarcely less.

THE END.